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THE WORKS

OF

JOHN HOWE, M.A.

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN HOWE, M.A.

SOMETIME FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXON.

VOLUME II.

A TREATISE OF DELIGHTING IN GOD;

THE REDEEMER'S TEARS WEPT OVER LOST SOULS;

AND

THE REDEEMER'S DOMINION OVER THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

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A TREATISE

OF

DELIGHTING IN GOD.

IN TWO PARTS.

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TO MY MUCH VALUED FRIENDS,

THE MAGISTRATES AND OTHER INHABITANTS

OF GREAT TORRINGTON IN DEVON,

WITH THE SEVERAL WORTHY AND RELIGIOUS PERSONS AND

FAMILIES OF MY ACQUAINTANCE IN THOSE PARTS.

It is likely that the title of the following treatise will put many of you, my dearly esteemed friends, in mind that sundry sermons were preached twenty years ago among you upon this subject. I had it, indeed, in design to have given you some abstract of those sermons; but searching among my papers, could fine none but so imperfect and broken memorials as would be of little use for that purpose. And yet being desirous to present you with somewhat that might both be a testimony of my affection and an advantage to you, and knowing this subject was grateful to many, and affords what may be useful to all of you, I have for your sakes applied myself to a reconsideration of it. Few passages or expressions probably will occur to you, that you heard before; yet you will find the substance of the doctrine the same; as from so plain a text it could not well but be, whosoever should have had the handling of it. The *first part* is even altogether new, except the introductive suppositions in the beginning. Nor do I remember I then had more than one discourse to you on that subject, before the practical application of it. The *other part* contains many things formerly delivered to you, though perhaps not in the same order, much less in the same words; whereto the short notes in my hands could no way enable me.

The matter here treated of is the very substance of religion,—the first and the last, the root and the flower, both the basis and foundation, and the top and perfection of practical godliness, and which runs through the whole of it. Nor knew I, therefore, what to present you with, that could have in it a fitter mixture and temperament of what might be both useful and pleasant to you.

As there is therefore no need, so nor do I desire you should receive the matter here discoursed of merely for my sake; there being so great reason it should be chiefly acceptable on higher accounts. I do very well understand your affection to me; and could easily be copious in the expression of mine to you, if I would open that sluice; but I do herein resolvedly and upon consideration restrain myself, apprehending that in some cases (and I may suppose it possible that in our case) a gradual mortification ought to be endeavoured of such affection as is often between those so related as you and I have been: which is no harder supposition, than that such affection may be excessive and swell beyond due bounds. So it would, if it should be accompanied with impatient resentments towards any providence or instrument whereby it finds itself crossed, or from whence it meets with what is ungrateful to it; if it prove turbulent and disquieting to them in whom it is, or any others; or if it occasion a looking back with distempered lingerings after such former things as could be but means to our great end, with the neglect of looking forward to that end itself still before us. Far be it from me to aim at the keeping anything alive that ought to die; that is, in that degree wherein it ought so to do.

But our mutual affection will be both innocent and useful, if it be suitable to mortal objects, and to persons not expecting the converse we have had together any more in this world; if also in the meantime it preserve to us a mutual interest in each other's prayers; if it dispose us to such acts and apprehensions of kindness as our present circumstances can admit; and if, particularly, as it hath moved me to undertake, it may contribute anything to your acceptance of this small labour which is now designed for you. The subject and substance whereof, as they are none of mine, so they ought to be welcome to you for their own sake, and His who is the prime Author, though they were recommended to you by the

hand of a stranger, or one whose face you never saw. They aim at the promoting of the same end which the course of my poor labours among you did (as He that knoweth all things knoweth),—*the serious practice of the great things of religion*, which are known and least liable to question ; without designing to engage you to or against any party of them that differ about circumstantial matters. They tend to let you see that formality in any way of religion, unaccompanied with life, will not serve your turn, as it will no man's,—than which there is nothing more empty, sapless, and void both of profit and delight.

I have reflected and considered with some satisfaction that this hath been my way and the temper of my mind among you. Great reason I have to repent that I have not with greater earnestness pressed upon you the known and important things wherein serious Christians do generally agree ; but I repent not I have been so little engaged in the hot contests of our age about the things wherein they differ. For, as I pretend to little light in these things (whence I could not have much confidence to fortify me unto such an undertaking), so I must profess to have little inclination to contend about matters of that kind.

Nor yet am I indifferent as to those smaller things that I cannot discern to be in their own nature so. But though I cannot avoid to think that course right which I have deliberately chosen therein, I do yet esteem that but a small thing upon which to ground an opinion of my excelling them that think otherwise, as if I knew more than they. For I have often recounted thus seriously with myself, that of every differing party, in those circumstantial matters, I do particularly know some persons by whom I find myself much excelled in far greater things than is the matter of that difference. I cannot, it is true, thereupon say and think everything that they do ; which is impossible, since they differ from one another as well as me : and I understand well, there are other measures of truth than this or that excellent person's opinion. But I thereupon reckon I have little reason to be conceited of any advantage I have of such in point of knowledge, (even as little as he should have, that can sing, or play well on a lute, of him that knows how to command armies or govern a kingdom,) and can with the less confidence differ from them or contend with them ; being thereby—though I *cannot find* that I err in these matters—con-

strained to have *some suspicion* lest I do, and to admit it possible enough that some of them who differ from me, having much more light in greater matters, may have so in these also. Besides that, I most seriously think, humility, charity, and patience would more contribute to the composing of these lesser differences, or to the good estate of the Christian interest under them, than the most fervent disputes and contestations. I have, upon such considerations, little concerned myself in contending for one way or another while I was among you; or in censuring such as have differed from me in such notions and practices as might consist with our common great end, or as imported not manifest hostility thereto: contenting myself to follow the course that to my preponderating judgment seemed best, without stepping out of my way to justle others.

But I cannot be so patient of *their* practical disagreement, (not only with all serious Christians, but even their own judgments and consciences also,) *who have no delight in God*, and *who take no pleasure in the very substance of religion.*

I have been grieved to observe that the case hath too apparently seemed so with some among you; some who have been openly profane and dissolute, and expressed more *contempt* of God (which you know was often insisted on the one part of the day, from Ps. x. 13, when I had this subject in hand the other,) than *delight* in him. I know not how the case may be altered with such since I left you, or what blessing may have followed the endeavours of any other hand. Death, I am sure, will be making alterations, as I have heard it hath. If these lines may be beforehand with it, may they be effectually monitory to any such that yet survive, that however this or that *external "form of godliness"* may consist with your everlasting well-being, *real ungodliness* and *the denial of "the power"* never can; which power stands in nothing more than in love to God, or delight in him. Therefore seriously bethink yourselves, Do you delight in God or no? If you do, methinks you should have some perception of it. Surely if you delight in a friend, or some other outward comfort, you can perceive it. But if you do not, what do you think alienation from the life of God will come to at last? It is time for you to pray and cry, and strive earnestly for a renewed heart. And if any of you do in some degree find this, yet many degrees are still lacking. You cannot delight in God but upon that apprehension as will give you

to see you do it not enough : therefore 'reach forth to what is still before.' I bow my knees for you all, that a living, delightful religion may flourish in your hearts and families, in the stead of those dry, withered things,—*worldliness*, *formality*, and *strife about trifles;* which will make Torrington a Hephzibah, a place to be delighted in ; your country a pleasant region ; and (if he may but hear of it) add not a little to the satisfaction and delight of

Your affectionate servant in Christ,

Who most seriously desires your true prosperity,

JOHN HOWE.

Antrim, *Sept.* 1, 1674.

A TREATISE OF DELIGHTING IN GOD

FROM PSALM xxxvii. 4.

"DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD, AND HE SHALL GIVE THEE THE DESIRES OF THINE HEART."

PART I.

SHOWING THE IMPORT OF THIS PRECEPT.

THIS Psalm, by the contents of it, seems to suppose an afflicted state of good men, by the oppression of such as were in that and other respects very wicked; the prosperity of these wicked ones in their oppressive course; an aptness in the oppressed to impatience under the evils they suffered; a disposition to behold, with a lingering and an envious eye, the good things which their oppressors enjoyed, and themselves wanted. Hence the composure of it is such as might be most agreeable to these suppositions, and serviceable to the fortifying of the righteous against the sin and trouble which such a state of things might prove the occasion of unto them.

This verse hath a more direct aspect on the last of these cases, or on this last-mentioned thing—considerable in the case of upright men suffering under the oppression of violent and prosperous wickedness,—namely, that they might hereupon be apt both to covet and envy the worldly delights of their enemies; to be desirous of their dainties, and grudge they should be theirs, who, they knew, deserved worse things; and while themselves also felt the pressure of worse, which at their hands they deserved not.

What is here offered to the consideration of the sufferers tends aptly to allay their discontent, to check and repress their inordinate desire towards inferior things, or to divert and turn it another way; as in case of bleeding to excess and danger, the way is to open a vein, and stop the course of that profusion by altering it. As if it had been said, 'You have no such cause to look with displeasure or immoderate desire upon their delicacies—you may have better; better belong to you, and invite you; the Lord himself is *your* portion. It becomes both your state and spirit to apply yourselves to a holy delight in him; to let your souls loose, and set them at liberty to satiate themselves, and feed unto fulness upon those undefiled and satisfying pleasures unto which you have a right, and in which you will find the loss and want of *their* meaner enjoyments abundantly made up unto you. You have your natural desires and cravings, as well as other men, and those may be too apt to exceed their just bounds and measures; but if you take this course, they will soon become sober and moderate, such as will be satisfied with what is competent, with an indifferent allowance of the good things of this earth. And towards the Lord, let them be as vast and large as can be supposed, they can never be larger than the rule will allow, nor than the object will satisfy: the direction and obligation of the former being indeed proportioned to the immense and boundless fulness of the latter.'

We need not operosely inquire what sort of persons this direction is given unto. It is plain that it is the common duty of all to delight in God. But it cannot be the immediate duty of all. Men that know not God, and are enemies to him, have somewhat else to do first. They to whom the precept is directly meant are the regenerate ("the righteous" and "the upright," as the psalm itself doth plainly design them), or his own people. The most profitable way of considering these words will be chiefly to insist on the direction given in the former part of the verse: and then to show, towards the close, how the event promised in the latter part, will, not only by virtue of the promise, but even naturally,

follow thereupon. The direction in the former part gives us a plain signification of God's good pleasure, that he himself would be the great object of his people's delight; or, it is his will that they principally delight themselves in him.

Our discourse upon this subject will fall naturally into two parts; the former whereof will concern the *import*, and the latter the *practice*, of the enjoined delighting in God; under which latter, what will be said of the latter part of the verse will fitly fall in.

That we may more distinctly open the import and meaning of delighting in God, it will be necessary that we treat,— I. Of *the delectable object;* II. Of *the delight to be taken therein.*

I. As to the former. The general object of delight is some good, or somewhat so conceived of, with the addition of being apprehended some way present. *Here* it is the chief and best good, the highest and most perfect excellency; which goodness and excellency, considered as residing in God, gives us a twofold notion or view of the object whereupon this delight may have its exercise, *absolute* and *relative.*

First. God may be looked upon in an *absolute consideration,* as he is in himself the best and most excellent Being; wherein we behold the concurrence of all perfections, the most amiable and beauteous excellencies, to an intellectual eye, that it can have any apprehension of.

Secondly. In a *relative consideration;* namely, as his goodness and excellency are considered, not merely as they are in himself, but also as having some way an aspect on his creatures. For considering him as in himself the most excellent Being, if here we give our thoughts liberty of exercising themselves, we shall soon find that hereupon he must be considered also as the first Being, the original and author of all other beings; otherwise he were not the most excellent. From whence we shall see relation doth arise between him and his creatures that have their being from him. And besides the general relations which he beareth to them all, as the common maker, sustainer, and disposer of them;

observing that there are some which, by their reasonable natures, are capable of government by him (in the proper sense, namely, by a law), and of blessedness in him; to these we consider him as standing in a twofold reference, in both which we are to eye, and act towards, him, namely, as a *Lord* to be obeyed and a *Portion* to be enjoyed, and have most delectable excellencies to take notice of in him—that require we should suitably comport with them—answerable peculiarly to each of these considerations: in respect whereof we are to look upon him,—

1. As the *most excellent Lord;* most delectably excellent (we take not here that title so strictly as to intend by it mere *propriety* or *dominion*, but as to ordinary apprehension it is more commonly understood to signify also *governing power* or *authority* founded in the other), whom we cannot but esteem worthy of all possible honour and glory; that every knee bow to him, and every tongue confess to him; that universal homage, subjection, and adoration, be given him for ever.

2. As the *most excellent Portion*, in whom all things that may render him such do concur and meet together; all desirable and imaginable riches and fulness, together with large bounty, flowing goodness, every way correspondent to the wants and cravings of indigent and thirsty souls. The former notion of him intimates to us our obligation of duty to him: the latter prompts to an expectation of benefit from him.

But now, because by the apostasy we have injured his right in us, as our Lord; forfeited our own right in him, as our portion; and lost our immediate capacity or disposition, both to serve and enjoy him; this great breach between him and us was not otherwise to be made up but by a mediator. Unto which office and undertaking his own Son, incarnate, "the Word made flesh" (being only fit), was designed. By him, dealing between both the distanced parties, satisfying the justice of God, overcoming the enmity of man, the difference, so far as the efficacy of his mediation doth extend, is

composed. And to the *reconciled*, God becomes again their acknowledged both Lord and portion. His right is vindicated, theirs is restored; and both are established upon new grounds, added to those upon which they stood before; and so as that now our actings towards God, and expectations from him, must be through the Mediator. Whereupon this object of our delight, considered relatively unto us, is entirely God in Christ: "Being reconciled,.....we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."[1]

In these several ways that have been thus briefly mentioned, may God come under our consideration. Nor are they, any of them, unapplicable or impertinent to our purpose, when we would design him the object of our delight. Yea, and surely God considered each of these ways ought to be looked on by us as a most delectable object!

For it is pleasant to contemplate him, even most *absolutely* considered, as the most excellent Being, when we behold his glorious excellencies in themselves; that is, not with the denial, but without the actual present consideration of any advantage that may redound to us from them; as we are apt to find ourselves pleased and gratified in viewing an excellent object (suppose a stately edifice, or beautiful flower), from which we expect no other benefit.

Again; if we consider him *relatively*, in the former capacity of a *Lord*, it is grateful to behold him decked with majesty, arrayed in glory, clothed with righteousness, armed with power, shining in holiness, and guiding himself with wisdom and counsel in all his administrations. Yea, and it is delightful to obey him; while we are most fully satisfied of his unexceptionable right to command us. For there is a great pleasure naturally arising to a well-tempered spirit from the apprehended congruity or fitness of things, as that he should command, and that we should obey; his right and our obligation being so undoubtedly clear and great; espe-

[1] Rom. v. 10, 11.

cially when we also consider what he commands, and find it is no hard bondage; that they are not grievous commands which he requires we be subject to, but such in the keeping whereof "there is great reward;" and that his ways are all "pleasantness and peace."

And being considered as a *Portion*, the matter is plain, that so rich and abounding fulness, where also there is so communicative an inclination, cannot but recommend him a most satisfying object of delight.

And thus we are more principally to consider him; namely, rather *relatively* than *absolutely;* and that relatedness (which the state of the case requires) as now anew settled in Christ. And so, though it be very delightful to look upon him as one that may, and is ready to, become related to us (as he is to any that will consent and agree with him upon the Mediator's terms), yet it adds unspeakably to the pleasantness of this object, when we can reflect upon such characters in ourselves as from whence we may regularly conclude that he is actually thus related unto us;—that is, that we have consented; that our relation to him immediately arises from the covenant of life and peace: that he hath entered into covenant with us, and so we are become his.

It is pleasant thus to behold and serve him as *our* Lord. How great is the emphasis of these words, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my* Lord!" To consider not only how well he deserves the acknowledgments and subjection of all, but also to find ourselves under the chosen and gentle bonds of perpetual service and devotedness to him, is certainly matter of very high delight and pleasure.

But how infinitely delightful is it to view and enjoy him as *our* Portion! And this seems very pertinent to the design of this scripture; which, aiming to recal and draw in the hearts of godly persons from too earnest and from envious lingerings after the enjoyments of worldly men (their enemies and oppressors), propounds what may be an over-balance to the imagined felicity of their state, and wherein they should

more than equal them in point of enjoyment. And should we single out this as the object to be considered—God as a portion,—that it might be more distinctly represented, we should have two things to take notice of that would render it most delectable, and such as wherein holy hearts may acquiesce, and rest with fullest satisfaction—the sufficiency and the communicableness of it.

(1.) The *sufficiency* of it; which cannot but be every way complete and full, it being the all-comprehensive good which is this Portion—God all-sufficient;—the most eminent and known attributes of his being, wherein by any issues of them they can be communicated, having an ingrediency and concurrence to the happiness of his people therein.

(2.) The *communicableness* thereof; which proceeds from his bounty more peculiarly, and his gracious inclination to do good, and make his boundless fulness overflow to the replenishing of thirsty, longing souls, whom first it had allured and caused so to long. But though the scope and order of the discourse in this psalm did not directly seem to import more than a design of calling off the persons here spoken to from one sort of enjoyment to another, from a meaner and more empty to a better; yet it is to be considered that true and the best enjoyment cannot be unaccompanied with duty, and that God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than as he is obeyed. Nor indeed are the notions of him, as a Lord to be obeyed and as a good to be enjoyed, entirely distinct; but are interwoven and do run into one another. We obey him even in enjoying him; it being part of our enjoined duty to set our hearts upon him as our best and highest good. And we enjoy him in obeying him; the advantage and benefit of his government being a real and most momentous part of that good which we enjoy from him, and in him. He is our *benefactor* even as he is our *ruler;* and is therein our ruler, as he proposes to us benefits which he thereby binds us to accept: for even his invitations and offers are also laws and formal bonds of duty upon us. Yea, and even the act of

delight itself pitched upon him is an act of homage, as there will be occasion hereafter to take notice.

Wherefore it will be fit to steer a larger course, than merely to consider him as a good commensurate to our *partial appetites;* which are apt to prescribe to, and limit our apprehensions to this or that particular sort of good, and tincture them with such a notion of delight, as which, if it be not false and grossly carnal, may yet be much too narrow and unproportionable to the universal, all-comprehending good. And though we shall not here go beyond the compass of delectable good; yet as there is no good, truly so called, which is not in or from the first goodness; so indeed, nor is there any capable of being gathered up into that sum which is not delectable.

Nor, therefore, can the usual distribution of goodness into *profitable*, *honest*, and *pleasant*, bear a strict test. Only the false relishes of vitiated appetite, in this corrupted state of man, have given ground for it. Otherwise, to a mind and will that is not distempered, the account would be much otherwise. To a prudent mind, profitable good would be pleasant, even as it is profitable. To a just and generous mind, honest, comely good would be pleasant, even as it is honest. Nor would there need another distinction, but into the goodness of the end, which is pleasant for itself; and the goodness of the means, which is pleasant as it is honestly and decently profitable (and otherwise it cannot be) thereunto.

That we may here, therefore, with the more advantage, state the delectable good we are now to consider, it will be requisite to premise two things:—

First. That all delightful enjoyment of God supposes *some communication from him.* Nothing can delight us, or be enjoyed by us, whereof we do not, some way, or by some faculty or other, partake somewhat; either by our external sense, sensitive appetite, fancy, memory, mind, will; and either in a higher or lower degree, for a longer or a shorter time; according as the delight is, for kind, degree, or continuance, which is taken therein. This is plain in itself.

And in the present case, therefore, of delighting in God or enjoying him, some communication or participation there must be, one way or other, according as the enjoyment of him is. And as the case with man now is, it is necessary HE do with clearest and the most penetrative light and power come in upon his mind and heart, scatter darkness, remove prejudice, abolish former relishes, transfuse his own sweet savour through the soul. Proportionably, therefore, to what is to be done, he communicates himself, as the event constantly shows, with all them that are ever brought to any real enjoyment of him. For we plainly see, that the same divine communication which, being received, doth delight and satisfy, doth also procure that it may be desired and received; makes its own way, attempers and frames the soul to itself; and gives it the sweet relish and savour thereof, wherein God is actually enjoyed.

Secondly. That however God himself is truly said to be enjoyed or delighted in by holy souls, yet this communication is also a sort of *mediate object* of this delight or enjoyment. These things being forelaid, it is now needful to inquire somewhat more distinctly what that communication or communicable good is, which is the immediate matter of proper, spiritual enjoyment unto holy men in this world: because many have that phrase of speech, "enjoying God," often in their mouths, that well understand not what they mean by it; yea, even divers of them that have real enjoyment of him; unto whom, therefore, though they possibly taste the thing which they cannot express, or form distinct conceptions of, it might be somewhat their advantage to have it more cleared up to their apprehension, *what* it is that they immediately enjoy when they are said to enjoy God, or by what *He* is to be enjoyed.

It is not a mere fancy (as too many profanely think, and are too apt to speak), that is the thing to be enjoyed. There have been those, who, comparing their own experience with God's promises and precepts (the rule by which he imparts, and according whereto men are to expect, his

gracious influence), were capable of avowing it, rationally, to be some very substantial thing they have had the enjoyment of. The sobriety of their spirits, the regularity of their workings, their gracious composure, the meekness, humility, denial of self, the sensible refreshing, the mighty strength and vigour, which have accompanied such enjoyments, sufficiently proving to them that they did not hug an empty cloud, or embrace a shadow, under the name of enjoying God. Such expressions as we find in the Book of Psalms (the 16th, and many other), with sundry parts of Scripture besides, leave us not without instance, that import nothing like flashy and flaunting bombast, no appearance of affectation, no pompous show of vainglory, no semblance of swelling words of vanity; but which discover a most equal, orderly, well-poised temper of mind, in conjunction with the highest delight and well-pleasedness in God. That rich and unimitable fulness of living sense could not but be from the apprehension of a *real somewhat,* and that, of a most excellent nature and kind, whatsoever be the notion that may be most fitly put upon it.

Nor yet is it the mere *essence* of God which men can be said to enjoy; for that is not communicated, nor communicable. Enjoyment supposes possession; but it would be a strange language to say we possess the essence of God otherwise than relatively; which is not enough unto actual enjoyment. His mere essential presence is not enough. That renders him not enjoyed by any; for that is equally with all and everywhere; but all cannot be said to enjoy him.

As therefore it is a *real,* so there must be some *special* communication, by which, being received, we are truly said to enjoy him. A *special* good it must be, not such as is common to all. For there is a communication from him that is of that extent, inasmuch as all live and move and have their beings in him, and the whole earth is full of his goodness. This is a good peculiar to them that are born of God; and suited to the apprehension and sense of that divine creature which is so born.

What this good is, how fully sufficient it is, and how or which way it is communicable, may be the better understood when we have considered what are the wants and cravings of this creature, or of them in whom it is formed and wrought. For when we have pitched upon the very thing itself which they most desire (and which they can tell is *it*, when they hear it named, though their thoughts are not so well formed about it as to give it the right name before), we shall then understand it to be both what will be *sufficient* to satisfy, and what may be *communicated* to that purpose.

But now, before that new birth take place in the spirit of man, it wants, but knows not what; craves indeterminately, —"Who will show us any good?" not fixing upon any particular one that is sufficient and finite, and labouring at once under an ignorance of the infinite, together with a disaffection thereunto. Its wants and cravings are beyond the measure of all finite good; for suppose it to have never so large a share, nay, could it grasp and engross the whole of it, an unsatisfiedness and desire of more would still remain. But that *more* is somewhat indeterminate, and merely imaginary—an infinite nothing—an idol of fancy,—a god of its own making. God it must have, but what a one he is it misapprehends; and wherein it rightly apprehends him, likes and loves him not,—will by no means choose, desire, or take complacency in him. So that an unregenerate soul is, while it is such, necessarily doomed to be miserable. It *cannot* be happy in any inferior good; and in the supreme, it *will not*.

What the real wants and just cravings of a man's spirit therefore are, is not to be understood by considering it in that state. And if the work of the new creature were perfected in it, it would want and crave no more; but were satisfied fully, and at perfect rest. Nor is that state so known to us as yet.

Therefore, they are best to be discerned in the state wherein that work is begun and hitherto unfinished; in which it therefore desires rightly, and still continues to desire;—a

state of intermingled motion and rest; wherein delight is imperfect, and alloyed by the continual mixture of yet unsatisfied desire. And yet it may be collected what it is that would be sufficient to satisfy; because their desire is still determined to "one thing,"[1] is not vagrant, wanders not after things of another kind, but is intent only upon more of the same.

Now let it be inquired of such a one what that thing is. We are generally told there, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD," etc. And it may be many would more shortly tell you, it is God they desire; whence it would only be concluded, it is God they aim to enjoy or delight in. But because this brings us but where we were, let it be further inquired, What, then, is your business with God, or what would you have of him? It is not, sure, to *be* God that you expect or seek, or to enjoy God in that sense wherein he possesses and enjoys himself! No, not by any means. It is, then, some communication from God, diverse from what all men have (for that they do not find apt to satisfy), which they desire and crave. And what is that? It is somewhat, as possible to be apprehended, and as distinguishable both from his incommunicable being, and his so generally communicated bounty towards all. As if the inquiry were, What it is that I desire really to enjoy when I desire to enjoy a friend? (namely, as the notion of a friend or friendship doth most properly import.) That is, neither to desire the *impossible* thing, of possessing his being as my own; nor the *unsatisfying* thing, the mere partaking some part of his external goods and wealth, whereof it may be he daily imparts somewhat to every beggar at his door: but it is to have his intimate acquaintance, his counsel and advice, the advantage of improving myself by his converse, and of conforming myself to his example in his imitable perfections, the assurances of his

[1] Ps. xxvii. 4.

faithful, constant love and friendship, in reference to all future emergencies. A friend is really to be enjoyed in such things as these.

And in such-like is God to be enjoyed also. But with this difference, that God's communications are more immediate, more constant, more powerful and efficacious, more delightful infinitely, and satisfying, in respect both of the good communicated, and the way of communication.

In short, then, the wants and desires of a renewed soul, the supply and satisfaction whereof it seeks from God, would be summed up in these things: That it may *know him* more fully, or have clearer apprehensions of him;—that it may *become like to him*, and framed more perfectly after his own holy image;—that it may be *ascertained of his love and good-will*, that he hath those favourable inclinations towards it which shall certainly infer his doing all that for it which its real necessities (to be estimated by his infinite wisdom) can call for. These are the things *in kind* which would satisfy it. And answerably to these we may conceive the communicable good which is the immediate object of their enjoyment; so that, as God himself is the object which is enjoyed, this is the object by which, or in respect whereof, he is enjoyable.

Therefore the divine communication, or that which is communicated from God to regenerate souls, wherein they are to delight themselves, contains in it,—

First. *An inwardly enlightening revelation of himself* to them, that they may know him more distinctly. This is a part of the "one thing,"—would be so highly satisfying and delightful: "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."[1] When their desires are towards God only, it is with this aim, in the first place, that they may know him; which is supposed when that is given as an encouragement to the pursuit of this knowledge, we "shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord,"[2] as if it had been said, 'This is a thing not doubted of, but taken for granted, that we would fain

[1] John xiv. 8. [2] Hos. vi. 3.

know the Lord; "we shall, if we follow on,"' etc. This is a dictate of pure and primitive nature, to covet the knowledge of our own original,—him from whom we and all things sprang. Men are herein become most unnaturally wicked, when they "like not to retain God in their knowledge."[1]

The new and divine nature once imparted (that is, primitive nature renewed and restored to itself), revives the desire of this knowledge, and in compliance with the present exigency of the case hath this inclination ingrafted into it, to know him as he is now only to be comfortably known, —namely, in the Mediator. "I determined not to know any thing among you," saith St. Paul, "save Jesus Christ," etc.;[2] that is, 'to glory in, to make show of, to discover myself taken with no other knowledge than this, or with none so much as this.' To which purpose he elsewhere professes to "count all things loss for the excellency of this knowledge;"[3] so vehemently did desire work this way. And proportionably as it is apprehended desirable, must it be esteemed delightful also. Nor are we here to think that this desired knowledge was intended finally to terminate in the Mediator, for that the very notion of mediator resists. The name—Christ—is the proper name of that office; and the desire of knowing him under that name imports a desire to know him in his *office*, namely as one that is to lead us to God, and restore our acquaintance with him, which was not to be recovered upon other terms. So that it is ultimately the knowledge of God that is the so much desired thing, and of Christ as the way, and our conductor to God; that is, the knowledge of God not *absolutely* considered alone (though he is, even so, a very delectable object, as hath been said); but as he is *related to us*, and from whom we have great expectations, our all being comprehended in him. It cannot but be very delightful (answerably to a certain sort of delectation of which we shall have occasion to speak in its proper place) to have him before our eyes represented and revealed to us as the all-compre-

[1] Rom. i. 28. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 2. [3] Phil. iii. 8.

hending good, and that (in the way and method whereinto things are now cast) *may*, at least, become our portion. He is some way to be enjoyed even in this view. It is a thing apt to infer complacency and delight thus to look upon him. They who place felicity in contemplation, especially in the contemplation of God, are not beside the mark, if they do not circumscribe and confine it there, so as to make it stand in mere contemplation, or in an idle and vainly curious view of so glorious an object, without any further concern about it. They will *then* be found to speak very agreeably to the language of Holy Scripture, which so frequently expresses the blessedness of the other state, by *seeing God*.

And if the act of vision be delicious, the representation of the object must have proportionable matter of delight in it. It cannot but have so, if we consider the nature of this representation; which, answerably to the sensible want and desire of such as shall be delighted therewith, must have somewhat more in it than the *common* appearances of God which offer themselves equally to the view of all men; though it is their own as common fault, that they are destitute of the more grateful and necessary additions. That it hath more in it, is evident from God's own way of speaking of it. For we find that his revealing himself in this delectable way,—

1. Is *attributed to the Spirit*, and as a work to be done by it *when it shall be given* (supposing it therefore yet not given, and that all have it not, yea, that *such* have it not in such a measure as they may have it, unto this purpose, who yet truly have it in some measure already, even as a thing peculiar to them from the unbelieving world): for it is prayed for to such as concerning whom it is said, that "after they believed" (not before) "they were sealed by the Spirit of promise," that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would give it them; and it is mentioned by a name and title proper to the end and purpose for which it is desired to be given them, namely, as "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," that end and purpose being immediately expressed,—"*in*" (or, as that particle is some time used, "*for*") "the knowledge of

him,"[1] "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened" by it (which are supposed blind before for the same purpose). By which prayer it is supposed a communicable thing; yea, and that these had some way a right to the communication of it; or that it was a thing proper to their state, fit to be prayed for, as some way belonging to them, they being in a more immediate capacity of such revelation than others. But how incongruous had it been with such solemnity of address to make request on their behalf for that which they already sufficiently had, as a thing common to all men!

2. It is *spoken of as a reward of their former love, loyalty, and obedience:* "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."[2] Therefore is such manifestation no more to be accounted common than the love of Christ is, and keeping his commandments. It is spoken of as given discriminatingly, and the grace of God admired upon that account. In the next words, "Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot" (it being well understood how little covetous he was of, or qualified for, such manifestations), "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"[3]

What it hath more than common light, external or internal, answerable to the deeply resented wants and the heart's desires of the regenerate, by which it becomes so highly pleasant and delectable to them, though it is rather to be felt than told (as it is hard to describe the very things we have only immediate sensible perception of), may yet in some degree be understood by such characters as these:—

(1.) It is much more *distinct and clear*. They are confused and dark glimmerings which other men have of the blessed God, so that "the light which is in them is darkness."[4] It is true that an unregenerate person may possibly have clearer acquired notions of God, and of the things of God, than those may be which are of *the same kind only* in some who are

[1] Eph. i. 13, 17, 18.
[2] John xiv. 21.
[3] *Ibid.* xiv. 22.
[4] Matt. vi. 23.

regenerate. So that he may—by the advantages he may have above some of the other in respect of better natural abilities, more liberal education, such circumstances of his condition as may more engage him to study and contemplation, and befriend him therein—be capable of finding out more, of making fuller discoveries and more evident deductions, and be able to discourse thence more rationally and satisfyingly to others, even concerning God, his nature, attributes, and works, than some very pious persons, destitute of those advantages, may be able to do. But these, though their candle give a dimmer light than the other's, have the beams of a sun raying in upon them that much outshines the other's candle. And though they know not so many things, nor discern the connections of things so thoroughly, yet as they do know what is most necessary to be known, so what they do know they know better, and with a more excellent sort of knowledge, proportionably as whatsoever is originally and immediately divine cannot but much excel that which is merely human. *Those* do but blunder in the dark; *these*, "in God's own light do see light."[1] And his light puts a brighter hue and aspect upon the same things than any other representation can put upon them. Things are by it represented to the life, which to others carry with them but a faint and languid appearance, and are all covered over with nothing else but dark and dusky shadow, so as that may be "hid from the wise and prudent which is revealed to babes."[2] How bright and glorious things are divine wisdom, love, holiness, to an enlightened mind! which is therefore supposed to have a clearer discovery of them.

But it may be said, 'Is there any thing apprehensible concerning these or any other matters which may not be expressed in some proposition or other? And what proposition is there which a regenerate person can assent to, but one who is not regenerate may assent to it also? what definition, so truly expressive of the natures of these things, can be

[1] Ps. xxxvi. 9.

[2] Matt. xi. 25.

thought of, unto which a carnal mind may not give its approbation? what can be said or conceived so fully and truly tending to describe and clear them up, but an unrenewed understanding may have the representation of the same truth so as to give entertainment to it?' It is answered, There are many things to which somewhat may belong not capable of description, and whereof we have yet a most certain perception; as the different relishes of the things we taste,—there are no words that will express those many peculiarities. And as to the present matter: there is somewhat belonging to the things of God (those for instance that were mentioned, his wisdom, holiness, etc.), besides the truth of the conceptions that may be formed about them, which is more clearly apprehensible to a divinely enlightened understanding than to one that is not so. As,—

First, The *beauty* of those truths, which it is most delightful to behold; their lively sparkling lustre, by which they appear so amiable and lovely to a well-tempered spirit as to transport it with pleasure, and ravish it from itself into union with them. There was somewhat else apprehensible, no doubt, and apprehended by them the inward sentiments of whose souls those words so defectively served to express, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness?" etc., besides the *mere truth* of any propositions that those words can be resolved into. And so in those, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" etc.; and those, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that," etc.; or those, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;" or the strains of that rapturous prayer, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, that

passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

There is a certain acceptableness in some truths, necessary to their being received in the love thereof, which is peculiarly so represented to some, as that their apprehension is clear and vivid beyond that of other men: who, however they have the representation of the *same things*, yet have not the *same representation;* though if they be things of necessary and common concernment, it is (as was said) their own fault that they have it not. And to have yet clearer apprehensions of this sort, is what the renewed soul doth most earnestly crave and would be proportionably delighted with.

Secondly, The *tendency* of such truths is much more clearly conceivable to a holy soul than another; what their scope and aim or aspect is, which way they look, and what they drive at or lead to. I mean not what other truth they are connected with and would aptly tend to infer: but what design God hath upon us in revealing them, and what impression they ought to make upon us. To the ignorance or disregard of which tendency and design of God's revelation, it is to be attributed that many have long the same notions of things hovering in their minds, without ever reflecting with any displeasure upon the so vastly unsuitable temper of their spirits thereto. They know, it may be, such things concerning God, the tendency whereof is to draw their hearts into union with him, to transform them into his likeness, to inflame them with his love. But they still remain, notwithstanding, at the greatest distance, most unsuitable, averse, coldly affected towards him, yea, utterly opposite and disaffected; and fall not out with themselves upon this account, have no quarrel nor dislike, take not any distaste at themselves for it. They take no notice of an incongruity and unfitness in the ill temper of their own spirits; but seem as if they thought all were very well with them, nothing amiss; and apprehend not a repugnancy in their habitual dispositions towards God to their notions of him.

For a vicious prejudice blinds their eyes; their corrupt

inclinations and rotten hearts send up a malignant, dark, and clammy fog and vapour, and cast so black a cloud upon these bright things that their tendency and design is not perceived; that prejudice not being conceived so much against the *abstract notions* of the things themselves (whence *they* are entertained with less reluctancy), but only against the design and scope of them. Against which poisonous cloud God's own glorious revelation directs its beams, dissolves its gross consistency, scatters its darkness, as to them to whom he by special grace affords it. Whereupon observing any remainders of the same distempers in their spirits, though it be in a considerable degree abated and lessened, they are ashamed of themselves for it, filled with confusion, yea, and indignation; do loathe and abhor and could even be ready, if it were possible, to run away from themselves. And what is the reason of this so great difference? Surely somewhat appears discernible to these in God's revelation of himself, which to the other doth not? They have then before their eyes a more clear prospect of the aim and scope of it; which, so far as they have it, pleases them, for they like the design well; only they are displeased at themselves that they comport no more with it. And as the end therefore aimed at is desirable to them, and would be delightful (as will be shown in its proper place), so is it to have that representation immediately offered to the view of their souls, which have so apt and comely an aspect thereon, not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of the end itself.

Wherefore there is somewhat to be apprehended by God's representation of himself to the minds of this regenerate people, at least *more clearly* than by other men. Whence the work of regenerating or converting them itself is expressed by "opening their eyes."[1] For the divine communication makes its own way, and enters at the eye, the soul's seeing faculty, which it doth find (as opening the eyes imports), and not now create; but finding it vitiated, and as

[1] Acts xxvi. 18.

to any right seeing of God shut and closed up, it heals, opens, and restores it as it enters. It is expressed by "turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan" (the prince of that darkness, the god of this world, who had blinded their eyes) "unto God." Which (because they cannot turn and move towards God blindfold, and that this opening their eyes is in order to their turning to God) implies, that their eyes were so distempered, blinded, and sealed up, chiefly towards him, so that, though they could see other things, him they could not see, but he was invisible to their intellectual as well as their bodily eyes. Hence also is that understanding said to be *given* (that is, as rectified and renewed), by which we know God; which implies it to be (wherein it is now given) somewhat superadded to the whole natural being and powers of the human soul, as in its present corrupted state,—he hath "given us an understanding to know him that it is true."[1] And that given rectitude of understanding is by such a communication from God as hath that aptitude and power in it to infer so happy a change. The same renewing work is also said to be a calling of men "out of darkness into his marvellous light;"[2] as if they were brought by it into a new world, wherein they found themselves beset with wonders, and all things were surprising to them. To which purpose is that prayer of the psalmist (out of a just consciousness that this work was not perfect in him, but might yet admit great additional degrees), "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."[3] He supposed many undiscovered wonders, which more open eyes might yet behold, in that external revelation of God's mind which was then afforded (and which was wont in those days to go under the name of his law, though it contained histories, prophecies, and promises as well as precepts): although he was no stranger to those records, nor little insighted into them, he yet apprehended a need of more light and better eyes; which he therefore

[1] 1 John v. 20. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [3] Ps. cxix. 18.

desires. Not that God would cause a new revelation to be written (though that he vouchsafed to do, and partly by himself), but that he might learn more out of that already extant; and that the wonderful things contained in it might be made more clear to him. Nor can we suppose him, herein, to desire to be gratified and delighted by the communication of an incommunicable thing.

(2.) It is more *powerfully assuring*, and such as is apt to beget a more certain operative belief of the things revealed; that is, being added to the means of faith men may be supposed to have had before, it adds much to their assurance of the same things so as to make it efficacious upon their spirits; and as well cures the doubtfulness, irresolution, and waywardness of their minds and hearts, as the confusion and darkness of them.

It is very possible those things may be distinctly understood, which the more we understand the more we disbelieve them, through their apprehended inconsistency with themselves or some certain truth. The delectable things of God, his own discovery procures at once, by one and the same radiation of light, both to be clearly understood and effectually believed. Others have the word of faith without the spirit of faith. The faith, therefore, which they have is a carcass; not a weak only (which imports but diminished power), but a dead thing, and which hath no power at all to determine the soul, and compose it to that delightful rest which such things, duly believed, would certainly infer. The most delectable truths of God, and such as most directly tend (in this apostate, lapsed state of man) to give us the sweet and refreshing relishes of a just and rational joy and pleasure, are such as are contained in the gospel of Christ; the things that concern our reconciliation, friendship, and communion with God in him, and which are therefore wholly of immediately divine and supernatural revelation, and to be received by faith. Therefore one apostle prays for some that they might be "filled with joy and peace in believing."[1]

[1] Rom. xv. 13.

And another says of others, that "believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory."[1] The external revelation in the gospel is an apt means to beget that faith which it is said "cometh by hearing." But the very notion of means, importing what intervenes to the effect between that and the principal agent, necessarily supposes such an agent; and that what is only means cannot work the effect alone. That agent, namely, in this case, God himself, or the Spirit, besides the means which he uses and makes effectual, must have his own influence whereby he makes them so. If a pen be a fit means or instrument to write with, it doth not therefore follow that it can write alone, without a hand to move and guide it; in order whereto a motive and directive influence is imparted. In the present case, the influence is the *inward, enlightening, overpowering communication,* whereof we speak; the efficacy whereof is such as to give the soul that peaceful rest in believing, which is also most pleasant and delightful, according as the things are found to be so which are believed. Nor doth it in order hereto work by way of enthusiastical impulsion, without any reference to the external revelation that is rationally and aptly suitable to the working of the effect: for then that should no way have the place *so much as of means.* But there being sufficient inducement to persuade that this external revelation is divine (so as to procure a rational assent to the things revealed, with any man that, having that revelation, with the account of its first confirmations, shall but use his understanding in reference thereto, and is not besotted to a party of sworn enemies to the Christian name), this inward revelation then falling in, captivates his heart to an entire unitive closure with the great things contained in the outward one, and principally with the Son of God himself; unto which union that whole revelation is most directly subservient. Therefore it was, that when divers others (of whom it is said, and particularly of Judas, that "they believed not") forsook

[1] 1 Pet. i. 8.

Christ, Peter and the other apostles stuck so resolutely to him, because "we believe," say they, "and are sure, that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God:"[1] which assurance we may then conclude was much of another sort than that of Judas; though we cannot suppose him to have wanted a rational certainty of the same truth, sufficient to have overcome *objections in his judgment*, but not sufficient to overcome *the contrary corrupt inclinations of his wicked heart*. Therefore, as the inward revelation uses not to do its work without the outward (for I suppose we have not heard of many Christians where the gospel hath not been), so nor is the outward revelation able, alone, to beget that which, in the more eminent sense, goes in Scripture under the name of faith. It may beget that merely *intellectual certainty*, which may prevail against all doubts and objections in a man's mind to the contrary, but not the contrary inclinations of his corrupt will. Most men's faith is but opinionative, and many men's never reaches so high as to a *rational* opinion: *that* proceeds upon having balanced considerations on both sides, and inclines to that part on which seems to be the most weighty; whereas the faith—as they call it—of too many is no other thing than a merely blind and sequacious humour grounded upon nothing but a willingness to be in the fashion; or the apprehension of disgrace, with other inconveniences, if, where that is the common profession, one should profess to be anything but a Christian; or a lazy indifference, easily determinable to that part which is next at hand to be chosen; or it may be, they never having heard of another profession,—which precludes any choice at all.

But admit it did arrive to a rational certainty, as it easily might with them that have, with the external requisite advantages, competent understanding, patience, diligence, and impartiality to consider,—that is, suppose it to proceed upon that abundant evidence which the case will admit, that the Christian doctrine hath been testified by God, and that

[1] John vi. 64, 69.

God's testimony cannot deceive,—there needs more to win and overcome men's hearts; which must be done ere the things revealed in the gospel can be apprehended delectable. What can any man have greater certainty of, in a mere human way, than all men have that they must die? And yet how few are there whose spirits are formed hereby to any seriousness agreeable to that persuasion! Whatever way a man comes to be certain of any thing that hath a contrary tendency to the bent of his habitually wicked heart, he needs more than the evidence of the thing to make it efficaciously determine his will against his former vicious course. If the matter be such as properly falls under faith, that faith grounds upon the authority of God, apprehended as avouching the truth of that revelation to which we subscribe our assent. But, then, it is lively or languid, according as the apprehension is we have of that avouchment. But the apprehension which is only the product of the external revelation, even recommended by the most advantageous and convincing circumstances, is too faint to command the soul. Who, amongst all the people of the Jews at Mount Horeb, could have any doubt but the authority that avouched the law there given them was divine? And yet how boldly do they rush into idolatry, against the express letter of that law; while the sound of that dreadful 'voice of words' which delivered it, could hardly, one would think, be well out of their ears! And though they could not doubt of God's authority, yet, for all that, their frequent rebellions are plainly resolved into their infidelity: "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they *believe* me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?"[1] "Yea, they despised the pleasant land: they *believed not* his word!"[2] Or what place could be left for rational doubt, with the multitudes that beheld the miracles of our Lord Jesus, but that they were God's own seal affixed purposely to the doctrine taught by him? Yet how few, though we must

[1] Num. xiv. 11.

[2] Ps. cvi. 24.

suppose many convinced, did heartily believe in him! More, abundantly, did upon a less advantageous external revelation after his ascension. And the reason is plainly told us: "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."[1] And how expressly have we it from his own mouth (after he had interpreted coming to him by believing on him),[2] "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him"![3] And afterwards having said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," he adds, "But there are some of you that believe not"[4] (so that no man's professed assent, though as forward a professor as Judas was, there referred to, will in strict account entitle him a believer, if it be not produced by the quickening influence of the Spirit); and then repeats, "Therefore I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."[5] And what provocation the Father had to withhold that quickening Spirit so generally from that people, any one may see that reads their story. Upon which, by the recess of that Spirit, they are hardened to as great a miracle as formerly their Egyptian oppressors were, many ages before; there being, indeed, no greater miracle—as was said of old—than that men should not believe upon the sight of so many miracles. And this dreadful dereliction, and consequent obduration, we see is referred to punitive justice as a vindictive dispensation; "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"[6] where it is obvious to observe, that the believing of the gospel report owes itself to the revelation of God's arm, or requires the exerting of his power, agreeable to that of the apostle, "That ye may know.....what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working

[1] John vii. 39. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 35. [3] *Ibid.* vi. 44.
[4] *Ibid.* vi. 63, 64. [5] *Ibid.* vi. 65. [6] *Ibid.* xii. 37, 38; Isa. liii.

of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead," etc.[1] And how the arm of the Lord came not to be revealed, or that power not to be put forth, is intimated in what follows: "Therefore they could not believe, because" (for which Esaias is again quoted) "he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart," etc.,[2] which shows, that as that blinding and hardening of eyes and hearts, in some superadded degrees thereof, is the effect of a penal dereliction or retraction of God's arm, for former obstinate opposition to the external revelation of the gospel, so there is a precedent blindness and hardness not otherwise vincible than by the arm of the Lord, and which, it being penally withheld, will naturally grow worse and worse. And certainly *that*, upon the withholding whereof such things certainly ensue as are inconsistent with believing, must needs itself be necessary to it. All which things considered, do so plainly speak the insufficiency of a mere external revelation, and the necessity of an internal besides, unto that faith which is the immediate spring of delight in God, that it is not needful to insist upon many plain texts of Scripture besides, that fully say the same thing;—as that, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;"[3] and again, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God;"[4] and, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."[5] Upon which words, with many more of like import in the sacred volume, no sense can be put which is tolerable, and not the same with what we have above asserted.

In short, faith is a part of homage paid to the authority of the great God, which is to be estimated sincere according as it answers the end for which the things to be believed were revealed. That end is not to beget only the notion of those things, as truths that are to be lodged in the mind, and go no farther,—as if they were to be understood true only that they might be so understood; but that the person might

[1] Eph. i. 18—20. [2] Isa. vi. 9, 10. [3] 1 Cor. xii. 3.
[4] 1 John iv. 15. [5] *Ibid.* v. 1.

accordingly have his spirit formed, and might shape the course of his whole conversation: therefore is it called "the obedience of faith;" and the same word which is wont to be rendered "*unbelief*," signifies *disobedience, obstinacy, unpersuadableness;* being from a theme which (as is known) signifies *to persuade.* So that this homage is then truly given to the eternal God, when his revelation is complied with and submitted to, according to the true intent and purpose of it; which that it may be, requires that his Spirit urge the soul with his authority, and overpower it into an awful subjection thereto: the soul being so disjointed by the apostasy, that its own faculties keep not (in reference to the things of God) their natural order to one another, further than as a holy rectitude is renewed in them by the Holy Ghost. Therefore is it necessary that the enlightening communication which he transmits into it be not only so clear as to scatter the darkness that beclouded the mind, but so penetrating as to strike and pierce the heart, to dissolve and relax its stiff and frozen rigour, and render it capable of a new mould and frame. In order whereto, "God, who," at first, "commanded the light to shine out of darkness," is said to have "shined into the hearts" of them whom he renews, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[1]

And as they to whom this communication of God is in some degree afforded, do hereupon apprehend how necessary it was to them that it should be afforded, and be such as they now find it (which they apprehended not before), so they perceive it to be delightful also, as well as necessary. And finding it yet given in to them but in an imperfect degree, their continual cravings are still for more. And having tasted hereby how gracious the Lord is, "as new-born babes, they desire it, as sincere milk, that they may grow thereby."[2] They hereby come to know God and the things of God with savour; and "wisdom having entered into their hearts,

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.

knowledge is pleasant to their souls."[1] Whereby, as every renewed taste provokes in them new desire, all such renewed desires dispose them unto further and more satisfying delight. They sensibly discern the difference between their former dry and sapless notions of God, and the lively-spirited apprehensions which they now have. They can in some measure understand the reason why the apostle should in such a rapture speak of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;" and why he should so triumphantly give thanks to God for the "manifestation of the savour of his knowledge in every place."[2] They can perceive there was good sense in those words, as they have a more quick and judicious perception of the fragrancy of that knowledge; it is to them a refreshing, vital, quickening perfume,[3] as the word there and before imports,—most cheeringly odoriferous, —the savour of life to life,—lively in itself, and to them; so full of life as to beget and transmit it, and replenish their souls therewith; so as they might feel life thence working in all their powers. A revelation of God, that is of such a nature, cannot but be highly delectable:

In respect to the *matter revealed, God himself* especially (if not yet testifying himself to be, yet at least willing in Christ to become) *our God*, in such a way, and upon such terms, as is expressed in the gospel. A more particular mention of the things, contained in this revelation, that are more apt to beget delight and feed it, is purposely deferred till we come to press and enforce the duty itself.

In respect of *the immediate way and manner of revelation*, with so much facility continually coming in from time to time upon the soul, according as it is found ready by a dutiful compliance to admit it, and doth lie open to it: for otherwise a fatherly severity is most fitly expressed in withholding it at some times.

In respect of the *life and vigour* which it carries with it, whereby it is experienced to be a vital light, and that it is

[1] Prov. ii. 10. [2] 2 Cor. ii. 14. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 16.

indeed, as is said, "life, which is the light of men."[1] Dull, sluggish ineffectual notions of such things can have little, comparatively, of delectation in them.

In respect of the *design and tendency* of the revelation, discernible at the same time, to draw the soul into union with God; and that there may be a continual intercourse between him and it; not that it might have a transient glance of so lovely an object, and no more. When once it apprehends, "God hath made this light shine in upon me, not to amuse me, but here he fixes it as a lamp to guide me, in a stated course of communion with him," how pleasant is it to think he will be known for this blessed purpose! Now, a communication of God, including a revelation of him apt to beget such a knowledge, cannot be without much matter of delight.

But besides that, though most naturally following thereupon, it also includes,—

SECONDLY, *A transforming impression of his image.* This yet more fully answers the inquiry, When a person is said to enjoy God, what doth he *immediately enjoy*, or whereby is he said to enjoy God? what doth God communicate or transmit, by which he may be said to be enjoyed? He communicates his own *living likeness*, the very *image of himself;* not the idea or likeness only by which he is known; though it must be confessed, the knowledge of him, if he be known to be what he truly is, must suppose a true likeness of him offered to the mind, and formed there. But this of which we now speak is not a merely representative, but a real image. The product of the former it is, as is sufficiently to be collected from what hath been said. For that appears to be not a mere airy, spiritless, ineffectual thing, as the notion of God and of all divine matters is with the most, but, as hath been said, operative, penetrating, efficacious, apt to beget suitable impressions upon the heart, and wholly transform the soul. The effect of it then is this transformative

[1] John i. 4.

impression itself; by which the soul becomes another thing than it was,—"a new creature;" old things being done away, and all things made new.[1] In respect of this, it is said to be "born of God." This is "the new man," which after God is said to be "created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness:" the divine nature participated; the seed of God; the ἀπαρχή, the prime and most excellent part of his creatures.[2]

Concerning this likeness, and the satisfyingness of it, in its perfect state, though much hath been discoursed elsewhere,[3] it will be requisite to say somewhat here also, that may bear a more direct reference to the present imperfect state of the regenerate in this world. That communication of God which must be supposed afforded them, in order to their delighting in him, could signify little to that purpose, if with deformed and diseased souls they were only to look upon a very lovely object, still themselves remaining what they were. Nor doth it delight them only as it is apprehended *apt and aiming* to work a happy change in them; but as it doth it, or hath in part done it,—as, like an active, quick flame, it passes through their souls, searches, melts them, burns up their dross, makes them a new lump or mass, forms them for God's own use and converse.

God is proposed unto our communion and fellowship under the name of *Light*.[4] But such a light, it appears, as whereby we that were darkness do also become "light in the Lord," as elsewhere it is expressed; that, as he is the "Father of lights," we may appear the children of such a Father, and walk accordingly,—that is, "as children of light."[5] For we are presently told, that "if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:" but "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we have a mutual fellowship,"[6]—that is, God and we. It is needful, then, that we have that apprehension of him. And

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17. [2] Eph. iv.; 2 Pet. i.; 1 John iii.; James i.
[3] Treatise on the Blessedness of the Righteous, chap. i. and iii.
[4] 1 John i. 5. [5] Eph. v. 8. [6] 1 John i. 6, 7.

he, therefore, by solemn message, makes that declaration of himself, that he is light: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light and with him is no darkness at all;" that is, the most pure, holy, excellent, glorious Being.

But for what purpose are we to have that apprehension? We are told by the apostle for what: he there makes that declaration with that design, that we might be entered into the same fellowship in which he was already; for that end, therefore, we are to have this apprehension. But inasmuch as he immediately adds, that yet while we converse in darkness, we lie, if we pretend to that fellowship, it is manifest that this discovery of God, and our suitable apprehension, are no further serviceable to their end than bringing us into fellowship with him, than as by his beams he begets us into his own likeness herein: and that so far as our capacity and present state admit, we be truly in a degree made pure, bright, shining, excellent creatures, resembling our Maker, and being a second time formed after the image of him that created us.

The *gospel* is the formative instrument in this work, as it was said to be the instrument or means of our intellectual illumination. The new creature is said to be "begotten of the word of God;" and the divine nature to be communicated through the exceeding great and precious promises, which, discovering God's gracious nature and favourable inclination towards us, are an apt means (but not more than a means) to render us well-natured (not cross, thwarting, contrary) unto him. Faith admits the gospel-discovery into the soul, and of an external word without, makes it become an ingrafted word, the word of Christ dwelling richly in us: and so gives it the advantage of becoming thus mightily operative; for unto them only who believe it is the "power of God to salvation." And being received, "not as the word of man, but as the word of God," it works effectually in them that believe. To them who believe it not, it signifies nothing; is to them an empty sound, or only as a tale that is told.

And inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is the instrument of this impression, by it the impression must be measured, with it must it agree. Which revelation being expressive of the nature of God, and of his mind and will in reference to us, the impression cannot but be agreeable to that revelation: but it must also carry in it the resemblance and likeness of God himself; for the gospel-revelation is God's seal, the stamp upon it is a model of his image. Whence, therefore, the soul sealed therewith, bears on it at once the signature both of the author and the instrument. But because our best and surest way of forming true and right apprehensions of God, is to attend and guide ourselves by the representation that is there made of him (for it were useless and in vain, if letting our thoughts work at random without reference to it, we might conceive as fitly of God and his mind concerning us as by the direction and guidance of it), therefore are we to aim at conformity to God *as he is there represented.* For that is the proper likeness to him we are to inquire after (and which only could be impressed by his gospel) that is expressed and represented there: "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."[1] It is by the glory of the Lord, shining through that glass, that we are changed. And the image whereinto we are changed is the same image that is to be seen in that glass. For there God hath provided such a representation of himself and of his mind should appear, as is most suitable to our case and state, and which it most concerns us to have the view and the image of. That represents him in his *imitable excellencies,* and shows what he is *towards us,* what his counsels, determinations, and constitutions are concerning us; and hereupon shows what we should be, or what temper of spirit becomes us in reference to such a revelation. And such, when we receive this his impressive communication, he really makes us thereby become. And then is it that it will be found

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

most highly delectable. A heart formed according to the revelation of God in Christ, and cast into the mould of the gospel (as is the import of the apostle's words:[1] "Ye have obeyed from the heart the doctrine into the type or frame whereof ye were delivered"), hath a spring of pleasure in itself; not of perfect, unmixed pleasure: for there is much yet remaining that cannot but be very displeasing and offensive to such as have learned no longer to "put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," and have "senses exercised to discern betwixt good and evil." And, indeed, by the same vital principle the soul is made capable both of the sweetest delights and the quickest sense of pain: while it was dead, it was sensible of neither.

Nor is it an original spring. Whatever it hath that is good and pleasant comes from a higher head, and is communicated. But the communication remains not in this heart as in a dead receptacle, but creates the soul where it is a living spring itself: "The LORD shall satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."[2] After which it follows, "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD," etc.[3] So, though the waters that are so pleasantly refreshing to holy souls are given by Christ, yet, he himself tells us, they shall be in him to whom they are given "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."[4] Whence also the "good man" is said to be "satisfied from himself;"[5] and the "mouth of the righteous" to be "a well of life,"[6]—that is, to others; much more must his heart be so to himself. Nor, indeed, can there be a vainer or more absurd design and expectation, than to aim immediately at delights and joys, without ever looking after that transforming, purifying, quickening communication from God, in which he is to be enjoyed: which is, apparently, the most prejudicial and dangerous mistake, the practical error (and so much the worse, therefore) of many persons of much pretence to reli-

[1] Rom. vi. 17. [2] Isa. lviii. 11. [3] *Ibid.* lviii. 14.
[4] John iv. 14. [5] Prov. xiv. 14. [6] *Ibid.* x. 11.

gion, that dream and boast of nothing less than raptures and transports, having never yet known or felt what the work of regeneration, or the new creature, means; and having only got some notions of God and Christ, that tickle their fancies without ever changing their hearts, these go for divine enjoyments. Others, somewhat awakened and convinced, but not renewed, though they do not pretend already to have, yet do, from the same mistaken apprehension, as vainly seek and catch at joys and sweetnesses, while their unsanctified hearts do yet lie steeped "in the gall of bitterness;" and they wonder and complain that they feel not in themselves the delights whereof they find Scripture sometimes make mention, while in the meantime they expect and snatch at them in that preposterous, impossible way, as to abstract them from the things themselves, wherein the pleasure and delight lies. They would have *delight* without *the delectable good* that must immediately afford and yield it, or without foregoing the noisome evils that resist and hinder it; which therefore makes it necessary to treat the more largely of the *delightful communication* by which only intervening souls are capable of delighting in God.

And as to this branch of it,—the *vital, sanctifying, transforming influence,* whereby the soul is wrought to a conformity to the gospel,—if we take a somewhat more distinct view of it, we shall find it cannot but have in it abundant matter of delight. In the general, the thing here to be communicated is a universal rectitude of temper and dispositions, including the removal of such as are sinful and corrupt, and the settlement of such as are holy and gracious; both to be measured and estimated, as to their good or evil, by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, surely that must be a blessed and delightful state—and it is that towards which this divine communication gradually tends—wherein a wretched soul, that was lost in the impurities of sin, shall be stripped and unclothed of all the pravity, perverse inclinations, corrupt affections, which the gospel of Christ condemns; and invested with all the parts of that purity, that gracious and holy

frame, which that gospel recommends: for as the former carry in them matter of certain vexation and anguish, which it is hereby freed from; so the latter manifestly carry in themselves matter of unspeakable delight and pleasure, which it hereby partakes. And by the same degrees by which this divine communication infers the latter of these, it expels the former;—by the same degrees by which any are made partakers of the divine nature, they "escape the corruptions which are in the world through lust."

And that we may be here a little more particular, without descending into the innumerable particularities which might be severally spoken of upon this occasion, we shall only consider this heart-rectifying communication, in reference to some of the more principal things towards which the spirit of man may be either perversely, or duly and aright inclined, that we may see what matter of delight it infers and brings with it.

In order whereto it must be considered, that wherein it is *transforming* it is also *enlivening*, and therefore furnishes the soul with the power of spiritual sensation; whereby it comes to apprehend its former temper as very grievous and detestable, not only being entire and undiminished, but even the relics of it which do yet remain; and proportionably, the holy frame to be introduced as highly covetable and to be infinitely desired: which, being supposed, it must needs be very delightful to such a soul to feel itself in part rectified, and to expect it further in its temper and inclinations:

First, Towards God, towards whom it was most disinclined; that is, both towards *him as its end*, and towards *Christ as its way to him*.

1. As to *himself, its end*. It finds, upon reflection, it was dead towards God, without motion towards him, without inclination,—all its powers bent, and set quite another way; so that to persuade it to begin a course of holy motion towards God, was a like thing as to persuade a stone to fly upwards. It could not trust the original Truth, nor love the sovereign Good, nor obey the supreme Authority. Its course was nothing else but continual recession from Him, towards

whom it should have been continually pressing forward with all its might. It was wont to say to Him, in whom was its life and all its hope, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" was utterly alienated from the life of God, and did choose to live as without him in the world. And although it still remains thus in too great a degree, yet as it abhors this as a hateful way of living, and desires it may be otherwise, so is it sensibly delightful that it doth in some degree perceive a change,—that now it can find itself returning into its right and natural state of subordination to God: which, while it was out of it, laid that claim to it, that its dislocation was uneasy, and it could have no rest; though it was not aware what the matter was with it, and could never thoroughly apprehend that it ought, much less could desire or aim, to return.

And if in returning, and its continual course afterwards (which ought to be but a continuing return and moving back towards God), there be much cause for the exercise of repentance, the disposition whereto is a part of that new nature now communicated, yet even such relentings as are due and suitable upon this account are not unpleasant. There is pleasure mingled with such tears, and with those mournings which are not without hope, and which flow naturally and without force from a living principle within, as waters from their still freshly-springing fountain. When the soul finds itself unbound and set at liberty,—when it can freely pour out itself to God, dissolve kindly and melt before him,—it doth it with regret only at what it hath done and been, not at what it is now doing, except that it can do it no more; affecting even to be infinite herein, while it yet sees it must be confined within some bounds. It loves to lie in the dust and abase itself, and is pleased with the humiliation, contrition, and brokenness of heart, which repentance towards God includes in it. So that as God is delighted with this sacrifice, so it is with the offering of it up to him. Many men apprehend a certain sweetness in revenge;—such a one finds it only in this just revenge upon himself. How unexpressible

pleasure accompanies its devoting itself to God, when bemoaning itself, and returning with weeping and supplication, it says, 'Now, lo! I come to thee; thou art the Lord my God! I have brought thee back thine own,—what I had sacrilegiously alienated and stolen away,—the heart, which was gone astray, that hath been so long a vagabond and fugitive from thy blessed presence, service, and communion. Take now the soul which thou hast made; possess thy own right; enter upon it; stamp it with the entire impression of thine own seal, and mark it for thine. Other lords shall no more have dominion. What have I to do any more with the idols wherewith I was wont to provoke thee to jealousy? I will now make mention of thy name, and of thine only. I bind myself to thee in everlasting bonds, in a covenant never to be forgotten.'

The *self-denial* which is included in this transaction hath no little pleasure in it. When the soul freely quits all pretence to itself, and by its own consent passes into his now acknowledged right; disclaims itself and all its own former interests, inclinations, and ends, and is resolved to be to him, and to no other: when this is done *unreservedly*, without any intention of retaining or keeping back anything from him; *absolutely*, and without making any conditions of its own, but only agreeing to, and thankfully accepting his; *peremptorily*, and without hesitation, and without halting between two opinions, 'Shall I? or shall I not?' (as if it were ready in the same breath to retract and undo its own act)—how doth it now rejoice to feel itself offer willingly! They that have life and sense about them, can tell there is pleasure in all this. And the oftener repetition is made hereof, so it be done with life, not with trifling formality, they so often renew the relishes with themselves of the same pleasure.

Continued *commerce with God*, agreeable to the tenor of that league and covenant struck with him, how pleasant and delightful is it!—to be "a friend of God," an associate of the Most High, a domestic,—"no more a stranger, a foreigner, but of his own household;" to live wholly upon the plentiful

provisions, and under the happy order and government of his family; to have a heart to seek all from him, and lay out all for him! How great is the pleasure of trust,—of living free from care, that is, of anything but how to please and honour him, in a cheerful, unsolicitous dependence,—expecting from him our "daily bread," believing he will not let our souls famish; that while they "hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled;" that they shall be sustained with the bread and waters of life; that when they hunger, he will feed them with "hidden manna," and with the fruits that grow on "the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God;" that when they thirst he will give water, and add "milk and honey, without money, without price:"—and for the body, not to doubt but he that feeds ravens and clothes lilies will feed and clothe them,—to be so taken up in seeking his kingdom and righteousness, as freely to leave it to him to add the other things as he sees fit; to "take no thought for to-morrow;" to have a heart framed herein according to divine precept; not to be encumbered or kept in an anxious suspense by the thoughts and fears of what may fall out, by which many suffer the same affliction a thousand times over which God would have them suffer but once; a firm repose on the goodness of Providence, and its sure and never-erring wisdom; a steady persuasion that our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, and what it is fittest for us to want, to suffer, or enjoy:—how delightful a life do these make! and how agreeable to one born of God, his own son, and heir of all things, as being "joint-heirs with Christ," and claiming by that large grant that says, "All things are yours;" only that in minority it is better to have a wise Father's allowance than be our own carvers.

To live in the *fear of God*, is not without its pleasure; it composes the soul, expels the vanity which is not without vexation, represses exorbitant motions, checks unruly passions, keeps all within in a pleasant, peaceful calm,—is "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones."

To live in *his love*, is delight itself, or a tendency towards

it: the disposition whereto being communicated from God, and a part of the holy new creature derived from him, is also part of the (secondary or subservient) delectable object; as the light that serves unto vision is partly, as the mediate object, somewhat of what I see, and doth partly, as a principle, actuate and concur with the faculty in the act of seeing. And as the blessed God himself is both the first principle and ultimate object of that and other gracious acts,[1] therefore it cannot but be pleasant to the soul to perceive that powerful influence from God stirring in it, by which it is disposed to design and pitch upon him as the great object of its highest delight, unto whom it laboured under so vile and wicked an aversion heretofore. Yea, though it yet have no certain persuasion of a present interest in him, yet this disposition of heart towards him, and that it finds it could satisfyingly rest in him as its best good, upon supposition it had such an interest,—the very strivings and contentions of the soul towards him upon this account, are not without a present pleasure: as we behold with an intermixed desire and delight a grateful object, which we would enjoy, but do not yet know whether we can compass or not. To be in that temper of soul, as to resolve, 'Him I will seek and pursue, him I will study to please and serve, and spend my strength and life in serving him' (which is to live in his love), 'though I yet know not whether he will accept, or how he will deal with me!'—this cannot but have a certain sensible delectation in it.

To live in a *stated, habitual subjection to him* as the Lord of our lives, how pleasant is it!—to have learned to obey; to be accustomed to the yoke; to taste and prove the goodness and acceptableness of his will, through an effectual transformation

[1] And how rationally men may be said at the same time to love, delight in, and enjoy the amiable or delectable object, and therewith also love their own love, enjoy their own fruition, or delight in their own delight, enough is said by some schoolmen. Nor, indeed, can it be conceived how the soul can *continue* to love or delight in anything but it must be so. For while it perseveres, every latter act justifies the former, and takes complacency therein, but all as directed towards such an object.

in the renewal of our minds; to be "by the law of the Spirit of life made free from the law of sin and death;" to be able to speak it as the undisguised sense of our hearts, "Because thy law is holy, therefore thy servant loveth it;" to reckon it a royal law of liberty, so as to account ourselves so much the more free by how much we are the more thus bound; when we affect to be prescribed to, and are become patient of government, not apt to chafe at the bridle, or spurn and kick at the boundaries that hem us in: this is a temper that hath not more of duty in it than it hath of delight. There is such a thing as "delighting in the law of God according to the inward man," when there is yet a difficulty in suppressing and keeping under inordinate, rebellious workings of corrupt nature, unto which there is no desire an indulgence should be given, by having the law attempered to them, but severity rather used, to reduce them to a conformity to the law: so will it be, if the law become a heart-impression; when it can once be truly said, "Thy law is within my heart," it will be also with the same sincerity said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God."[1]

The continual exercise of *a good conscience towards God* hath great pleasure in it. Hereby our way and course is continually reviewed, and we pass censures upon ourselves, and upon that account survey our own works. And by how much the more carefully and often this is done, so much the more delectable it will be; that is, the more approvable we shall find them upon review. For we shall order our course the more warily, as we reckon upon undergoing an inquisition and search; wherein an apprehensive, serious heart well understands it is not itself to be the supreme judge. How blessed an imitation might there here be of the blessed God himself, who we find beheld his six days' works, and, lo, they were all "very good;" whereupon follows his delightful day of rest: so we shall, in some degree of conformity to him, finding our works to be in that sort good, as that he will by gracious indulgence

[1] Ps. xl. 8.

accept them as such, have our own sabbath,—a sweet and peaceful rest in our own spirits. Though we can pretend no higher than *sincerity* only, yet how sweet are the reflections of a well-instructed conscience upon that! When our hearts reproach us not, and we resolve they shall not as long as we live; we are conscious to ourselves of no base designs; we propose nothing to ourselves wherein we apprehend cause to decline God's eye; we walk in the light, and are seeking no darkness or shadow of death, where, as workers of iniquity, we may hide ourselves from him; can implore him as an assistant, and appeal to him as a judge in reference to our daily affairs and wonted course;—is this without pleasure? "This is our rejoicing," saith the Apostle, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation," etc.[1] And thus to converse with God, and him whom we daily design to glorify and serve, and whom we expect daily in some measure, and fully and finally ere it be long, to enjoy, is certainly throughout a "way of pleasantness and peace." How delectable then is this soul-rectifying communication from God, whereby, being before so disaffected, it becomes now so well inclined towards him in all these respects!

But because the exigency of the case did require, by reason of sin that had cut off the intercourse, that there should be a Mediator to open the way, and renew the former out-worn friendship; therefore it was also necessary that, so the soul might duly move towards God, it should be rightly framed and disposed also *towards him.*

2. We are therefore to consider, too, how delectable this communication must be, as it aright disposes the heart *towards Christ our way to God.* For towards him we must understand it to have been most obstinately and inflexibly averse; and that, therefore, a mighty communication of power was necessary to set it right here. Unto that part of

[1] 2 Cor. i. 12.

religion which is natural there was so much of an advantage beforehand, as that there was an old foundation to build upon. There are some notions of God left, not only concerning his existence, but his nature and attributes, many of them; and from the apprehension what *he* was, it was in some measure discernible what *we* should have been, and ought yet to be towards him; and from thence many checks and rebukes of conscience wherein it was found to be otherwise: so that here was somewhat *in nature* to be wrought upon, as to this part of religion. But as to that part which respects the Mediator, this was a frame wholly to be raised up from the ground. There were no principles immediately and directly inclining to take part with the gospel, but all to be implanted anew; the way that God would take to bring back souls to him being so infinitely above all human thought. And therefore, though to a considering Pagan it would not sound strangely that God ought to be trusted, feared, loved, etc., yet even to such the gospel of Christ was foolishness. Besides that, this way of dealing with men was not only unknown and unimaginable to them, not so much as once thought of, or to be guessed at; but the tendency and aspect of it, when it should come to be made known, was such as that it could not but find the temper of men's spirits most strongly opposite,—not merely ignorant, but prejudiced and highly disaffected. For this course most directly tended to take men quite off from their old bottom; to stoop and humble, and even bring them to nothing; to stain the pride of their glory, and lay them down in the dust as abject wretches, in themselves fit for nothing but to be trampled on and crushed by the foot of divine revenge. Suppose a man to have admitted a conviction, from the light of his own mind and conscience, that he was a sinner, and had offended his Maker, incurred his just displeasure, and made himself liable to his punishing justice; it would yet have been a hard matter to make him believe it altogether impossible to him to do anything to remedy the matter, and restore himself to divine favour and acceptance. He would naturally be in-

clined to think, Why, admit the case be so, he should easily find out a way to make God amends. He would recount with himself all his own natural excellencies, and think himself very capable of doing some great thing, that should more than expiate his offence, and make recompense abundantly for any wrong that he had done. But when the gospel shall come and tell him he hath deserved eternal wrath, that his sin is inexpiable but by everlasting sufferings, or what is of equal value; that here is one,—the eternal Son of God, who became a man like himself, and thereupon a voluntary sacrifice, to make atonement for the transgression of men; that God will never accept another sacrifice for the sins of men than his, nor ever any service at their hands but for his sake; that *him* now revealed to them they must receive, rely upon, and trust to wholly, or perish without mercy; yea, and that he hath put the government over them into his hands, laid it on his shoulders, and to him they must subject themselves as their Ruler and Judge,—the great Arbiter of life and death to them and all men:—that they are to be entirely devoted to him as long they live, as their Redeemer and Lord,—in him as they are to have righteousness and strength, so to him they must pay all possible homage and subjection, to him "their knees must bow and their tongues confess;" they must receive the law from his mouth, be prescribed to by him, comply with his will, though never so much to the crossing of their own, and though, notwithstanding, they must know they can deserve nothing by it; that so vile and worthless miscreants they are become, that God will never have to do with them upon other terms; when this shall appear the state of the case, and it comes to be apprehended, 'Then must I yield myself a greater transgressor than ever I thought, and an undone, impotent, helpless wretch? I shall thus make nothing of myself; and what! must all my natural or acquired excellencies go just for nothing, and a person of such worth and accomplishments as I be thus brought down to the dust? yea, and besides, to be brought under such bonds, and profess to owe myself so

entirely to a Redeemer, that I must for ever live after his will and pleasure, and no more at my own; and can never hope, if I take a liberty to indulge myself besides the allowance of his rules, that I can ever make any amends for such transgression by anything that I can do; so that by taking his gift of my pardon and life upon such terms, I shall sell my liberty, and render myself a perfect slave to his will and pleasure for ever!'—here now cannot but be a strong stream to be striven against, and most vehement counter-strivings of the haughty and licentious spirit of man. So that it is not strange it should be said by our Saviour, "No man can come to me except my Father draw him;" and that the exceeding greatness of power, according to the workings of the mightiest power in any case, should be put forth upon them that believe. Therefore are men in Christ by creative power only: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."[1] He is new made, if he be in him. And this aversion, being so deeply natural, will still in a degree remain,—while anything of corrupt nature remains,—in the hearts of even the regenerate themselves.

Therefore a continual exertion of the same power will be ever requisite to hold souls to Christ, and retain them in their station in him: "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, is God;"[2] *q. d.* it is only a God that can do this. Therefore how is God admired and adored upon this single account: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (this was indeed a great secret to the lapsed world) . . . . . "to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."[3]

But as the heart-rectifying communication from God, in this matter, is such as carries mighty power with it, so it doth proportionable pleasure, when it hath overcome, and, to the pitch of sincerity, set the soul right in this thing.

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17. [2] *Ibid.* i. 21. [3] Rom. xvi. 25, 27.

How delectable is it to receive the son of God, when the heart is made "willing in the day of his power," when his cords take hold of the soul, and draw it to him! What pleasure is there in the consenting, self-resigning act and disposition!

It is most highly delightful to receive him, and give up ourselves to him, as *our full, suitable good,* so exactly answering all the exigencies of our distressed case; when, sensibly apprehending the true state of it, the soul cries out, 'None but Christ!' and finds him present, waiting only for consent, readily offering himself,—'Here I am, take me,—thy Jesus, thy help, thy life!' How overcomingly pleasant is this to a soul that feels its distress, and perceives itself ready to perish; yea, and that daily sees itself perishing, were it not for him! How pleasant, when in the "time of love" he finds the poor soul in its blood, and says to it, "Live;" clothes it, decks it, makes it perfect through his own comeliness; tenders himself to it, unto it taken off the dunghill, cast out in the most loathsome, deplorable plight; and enters the marriage-covenant with it (we need not be squeamish or shy to speak after God himself so representing this matter), —overcomes by his own mercy and goodness, and prevails with a sinful creature to accept him! How gladly doth it throw off everything of its own, that it may entirely possess him, and be possessed by him! Here is the joy of a nuptial solemnity, or the joy of espousals: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine!"

While as yet this transaction is not distinctly reflected on (as when possibly afterwards it is, there may great difficulties and doubts arise, whether all were rightly done, or yet be on its own part, yea or no), if, however, it be truly done, in the very doing itself, and the same continuing disposition, there is a sensible and inseparable delight. I say in the same disposition, as often as by any repeated acts of the same kind it expresses and shows itself; that is, as often as this covenant is renewed, whether with solemnity or more occasionally, though the relation arising thence be not in the same instant

considered or reflected on, nor the *sincerity* of the act itself, which is necessary thereto, yet that very consent itself, if it be sincere, hath a secret joy accompanying it, and the soul *feels* the gratefulness and pleasure of its own act, though it do not for the present examine and take a view of it. For it is now, from a principle of life, embracing and drawing into union with itself an object that is all life, and goodness, and sweetness; which therefore sheds its own delightful savour and fragrancy through the soul, while it is in the meantime acting only upon the object directly, and not reflecting upon its own act, or considering in that very instant what will be consequential thereupon. But if withal it do consider (as that consideration cannot be far off, though it cannot consider everything at once) that it is receiving him that is to bring it to God; who is able to do it ("even to save to the uttermost all that will come to God by him"); who is intent upon that design, and did in the midst of dying agonies breathe forth his soul in the prosecution of it; and with whom God requires it to unite for this very purpose;—this cannot but add unspeakably to the delightfulness of this transaction, and of this effusion of the Holy Ghost, in the virtue whereof the thing is done, how oft soever it be seriously done; as our case and state require that it be very often.

And to receive him *as our Lord*, which is joined with that other capacity wherein we receive him, namely, of a Jesus or Saviour,—"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so,"[1] etc., this also, and the heart-subduing influence that disposes to it, is most highly delectable. When the soul that was so stoutly averse, and that once said within itself, 'I will not have him to reign over me,' is brought freely to yield; and with sincere, loyal resolutions and affections devotes itself to him, consents to his government, submits its neck and shoulder to his yoke and burden, says to him with an ungainsaying heart, as its full sense, 'Now, thou Lord of my

[1] Col. ii. 6.

life and hope, who hast so long striven with me, so oft and earnestly pressed me thereto, so variously dealt with me to make me understand thy merciful design, and who seekest to rule with no other aim or intent but that thou mayst save; and who hast founded thy dominion in thy blood, and didst die, and revive, and rise again, that thou mightest be Lord of the living and the dead, and therefore my Lord,—accept now a self-resigning soul. I make a free surrender of myself, I bow and submit to thy sovereign power, I fall at the footstool of thy throne, thou Prince of the kings of the earth, who hast loved sinners, and "washed them from their sins in thy blood"—glory in thy conquest; thou hast overcome. I will from henceforth be no longer mine own, but thine; I am ready to receive thy commands, to do thy will, to serve thy interests, to sacrifice my all to thy name and honour, my whole life and being are for ever thine.'—I say, as before, there is pleasure in the very doing this itself, as often as it is sincerely done. And it adds hereto, if it be more distinctly considered it is no mean or any way undeserving person to whom this homage is paid, and obligation taken on unto future obedience. He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, the heir of all things, and who sustains all things by the word of his power;" it is he whose name is "Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace;" it is he to whom "all power is given both in heaven and earth," and, more especially, "power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him;" it is he who "spoiled principalities and powers, and made an open show of them;" he whom, because when he was "in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he humbled himself, made himself of no reputation, took on him the form of a servant, became obedient to death, the Father hath therefore highly exalted, and given him a name above every name, that in his name every knee should bow;" and of whom, when he brought him, his first born, into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

And such a one he is, whose temper is all goodness and sweetness: "Tell Zion, Thy King cometh, meek and lowly." He came into this world, drawn down only by his own pity and love, beholding the desolations and ruins that were wrought in it everywhere; sin universally reigning, and death by sin, and spreading its dark shadow and a dreadful cloud over all the earth: in which darkness the prince thereof was ruling, and leading men captive at his will; having drawn them off from the blessed God, their life, and sunk them into a deep oblivion of their own original, and disaffection to their true happiness, that could only be found there.

This great Lord and Prince of life and peace came down on purpose to be the restorer of souls,—to repair the desolations and ruins of many generations. He came "full of grace and truth," and hath scattered blessings over the world wheresoever he came; hath infinitely obliged all that ever knew him: and is he "in whom all the nations of the earth must be blessed." And who would not with joy swear fealty to him, and take pleasure to do him homage? Who would not recount with delight the unexpressible felicity of living under the governing power of such a one?

And if the tenor and scope of all his laws and constitutions be viewed over, what will they be found, but obligations upon men *to be happy?* How easy his yoke! how light his burden! What is the frame of his kingdom, or whereof doth it consist, but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"? And who would not now say, "This Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof"?[1] Why should it not be triumphingly said among the heathen, that "the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved:.....let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein, and all the trees of the wood rejoice"?[2]

[1] Ps. xcvii. 1. [2] *Ibid.* xcvi. 10—12.

It is plain, that, be the matter of joy here what it will, be there never so much cause of exultation and glorying in him, the "righteousness and peace" which his kingdom promises never actually take place, nor the "joy" that is in connection therewith, till the Holy Ghost dispose and form men's spirits thereto.[1] For all this is but mere dream and idle talk to those who hear only of these things, and feel not that vital influence insinuating itself, that may give the living sense and savour of them. And we may rather expect seas and fields, beasts and trees, to sing his triumphant song, and chant his praises, than those men whose hearts are not attempered to his government, and who are yet under the dominion of another lord, not being yet, "by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, made free from the law of sin and death." But where this is effectually done, how large matter of most rational pleasure do they find here, while there is nothing in that whole system of laws by which he governs that is either vain, unequal, or unpleasant, or upon any account grievous! Only this is not the estimate of distempered spirits, or of any other than them in whose hearts his law is written, and who, "because they love him, keep his commandments."[2] Unto love, his commands are most connatural; for "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." They "are not grievous;"[3] that is (by the *meiosis* which some do reasonably enough apprehend in those words), 'they are joyous, delightful, pleasant,'—but to them only who, being "born of God, have overcome the world." This holy influence and communication of God is therefore grateful, and contributes not a little to delight, in this respect, that thereby men's spirits are rectified and set right towards God, namely, both towards the Creator and Redeemer.

Secondly, As hereby they are rectified *towards men*, having the universal law of love wrought deep into their hearts, being "filled with all goodness, righteousness, meekness, mercifulness," apt to do no wrong, to bear any,—to pity and help the

[1] Rom. xiv. 17. [2] John xv. 10. [3] 1 John v. 3.

distressed, to love enemies, and, as there is opportunity, "to do good to all, especially to them who are of the household of faith,"—we must understand in this, as well as in the other parts of that stamp which the Spirit of God puts on the souls of men, that the impression corresponds and answers to the seal, as hath been said,—the inward communication to the outward revelation of God's will. And so we find the matter is; for as divine precepts require this should be the temper of men's spirits, so the very things that compose and make up that blessed temper are said to be the fruits of his own Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness," etc.[1] And again, "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."[2] Now, hath not that soul a spring of pleasure within itself, that is in these respects as God would have it be? that is conscious to itself of nothing but righteousness, goodness, benignity, candour towards any man, and is in all things acted by a spirit of "love, that suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," and "never faileth;"[3] that so equally poises and acts a man's spirit, that he carries seemly and suitably towards all men,—takes pleasure in the best, in "the saints and excellent ones of the earth hath all his delight;" and is no worse affected than to wish them better, *even towards the very worst*,—neither envies the greatest nor despises the meanest,—neither is revengeful towards them that injure him, nor unthankful to them that oblige him; that is apt to learn of good men, and to teach the bad, by observing and giving the most imitable example; that is not undutiful to superiors, nor morose and unconversable towards equals; that lives not to himself, is a common good to all within the sphere through which his

[1] Gal. v. 22, 23. [2] Eph. v. 9. [3] 1 Cor. xiii. 4—8.

activity can extend itself; that doth good with inclination, from the steady propension of his own will, and an implanted principle of goodness? It is evident God hath formed such a man's spirit unto delight of the purest kind, and the best sort of pleasure: unto which they who are strangers, banish it from their own breasts, by the resistance and grief they give his blessed Spirit, thereby making it a stranger there; and by harbouring in their own bosoms their own tormentors, the pride, the wrath, the envy, the malice, the revengefulness, the bitterness of spirit, which, as they render them uneasy and intolerable to all that are about them, so most of all to themselves; and which while they prey wherever they range abroad, yet still bite most keenly and tormentingly that heart itself wherein they are bred, as poisonous vipers gnawing the bowels which enclose them.

Thirdly, Towards themselves; which also may be considered distinctly; for though all the good qualifications we can mention or think of, do redound to a man's self, and turn to his own advantage, repose, and delight (which it is the design of all this discourse to show), yet there are some that more directly terminate on a man's self, wherein the rectitude we now speak of doth in great part consist. When we are obliged to love others as ourselves, it supposes not only an allowable, but a laudable self-love: "Men shall praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." Before this right spirit be renewed in a man, he doth not only wound himself by blows that are reflected on him, and hurt at the rebound, but by many a direct stroke; or he lets the wounds fester and corrupt, to the cure whereof he should with all diligence directly apply himself. How unpropitious and cruel to themselves are all unholy persons! What wastes and desolations do they commit and make in their own souls, by breaking the order God and nature did at first set and establish there, dethroning their own reason and judgment, which ought to bear sway and govern within them! This banishes delight, and drives it far away from them. They see what is fittest for them to do and seek, and run a quite counter course. What storms

do they hereby raise in their own bosoms! What a torture is it, when a man's own light and knowledge bear a standing testimony against him, and hold him under a continual doom!

How ill disposed are men towards themselves, when they wholly neglect themselves in one kind, when they too much mind and seek themselves in another; when they too little understand themselves, so as not to put a true value on themselves, but do either disesteem themselves as to their more noble part, in respect of that common excellency which belongs to them with all other men, or do over-magnify themselves and are conceited, and too well-opinioned of themselves in respect of any peculiar excellency wherein they imagine they outstrip others! How ill do they treat themselves in their self-indulgence, their gratifying their own sensual inclination, with the greatest danger and damage to their souls, when they care not at what expense they make provision for the flesh to "fulfil the lusts thereof"! What unkind usage do they find at their own hands, when they cherish and countenance desires which they cannot gratify, and raise to themselves expectations of things not within their own power,—which being disappointed, turn into so many furies, and in that shape take a sharp revenge upon their own hearts! when they exercise no authority and dominion over themselves, preserve not the liberty due to what should both be itself free and should command the rest in them; enslave themselves to vile and ignominious lusts and passions, put out their own eyes, and grind blindfold to the basest and most tyrannical lords, their own sordid humours, and base, mean appetites; when, though they serve more rigorous taskmasters than the Israelites in Egypt did, and are more sorely beaten by them when their tale is not fulfilled for want of materials, yet groan not because of their hard bondage, nor affect liberty!

This gracious communication from God sets all things in a good degree right within; so that where there was nothing before but horrid and hellish darkness, disorder, and confu-

sion, there now shines a mild, pleasant, cheerful light, that infers regularity, purity, and peace.

How great is the pleasure that arises from *self-denial* —wherein we do, duly and as we ought, deny ourselves—not only as it is an act of duty towards God, of which before, but as it is an act of justice and mercy towards our own souls;—that is, wherein we make a just and *true estimate* of ourselves; do esteem basely of ourselves wherein we are really become base and vile; and wherein there is anything of real value and excellency in our own beings, we value it only upon that account, and in that subordination, wherein it is truly valuable! How pleasant, when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves! when we are not apt to magnify and applaud, to trust or love, to seek and serve ourselves unduly, and are only inclined to own, to cleave and stick to ourselves, wherein and so far as we ought! when that idol *self* is no longer maintained within us, at the dear expense of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope,—an idol that engrossed the whole substance of our souls, that exhausted and devoured the strength and vigour of our spirits, which it doth not maintain, and cannot repair,—which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual exercise and hurry, to make a costly, a vain, an unlawful provision for it! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel in being delivered from that soul-wasting monster, that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate and with more costly sacrifices and repasts, than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history; that hath made more desolation in the souls of men than ever was made in their towns and cities, where idols were served by only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated with only such refections; or where the lives and safety of the most were to be bought out by the constant successive tribute of the blood of not a few: that hath devoured more, and preyed more cruelly upon human lives, than Moloch or the Minotaur! When this monstrous idol is destroyed and trodden down, what a jubilee doth it make! what songs of triumph and praise doth it furnish and

supply to the poor soul, now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage! How much more easy and reasonable a service is it—when once the grace of God and their own experience give men to understand it—to study to please him than themselves! when they feel themselves dead to their former lord and service, and only "alive to God, through Jesus Christ;" when "sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof;" when they no more "yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but have yielded themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead;" when, "being made free from sin, they are become servants unto righteousness:"[1] "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin."[2] What an ease is it to the spirit of a man, when he hath not himself to seek, and serve, and care for, in any unlawful, disallowed sense; when he finds not himself necessitated or urged by his own imperious fleshly inclinations so to do; when he perceives himself by a prevailing better principle counterpoised, and the weight and bias of his own spirit incline him quite another way; when he finds he hath nothing left him to do but to serve God, to know his will and do it, and is disburdened of all unnecessary care for himself,—that which is necessary being part of his duty, and is therefore done on purpose only for God,—and that which is unnecessary and forbidden (which part only was burdensome) being supplied by—what hath the greatest ease and pleasure in it imaginable—trust and self-resignation to his pleasure and will whose we wholly are! What life is pleasant, if this be not? Surely, wherein it is attained to, it is most pleasant; and hither this gracious, heart-rectifying communication is gradually tending.

How great is the pleasure that arises from *self-government!* when that governs in us which should govern, and that is subject and obeys which should obey; when a man's mind is competently furnished with directive practical principles, and

[1] Rom. vi. 11—13, 18. [2] *Ibid.* viii. 2.

his heart is so framed that it is capable of being prescribed to, is patient of restraints and direction, easily obeys the rein, and follows the ducture of an enlightened, well-instructed mind; when the order is maintained between the superior faculties and the inferior, and there are no contentious murmurs of ungovernable appetitions and passions against the law of the mind! It is true, that where this holy rectitude doth but in a degree take place, there will be many conflicts, but those conflicts are in order to victory: and how joyful and glorious is the triumph upon that victory! when the soul enters upon its ἐπινίκιον, its thanksgiving song, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" How happy a state is that (wherein at some times it is here attained), when there are now no tumults within! "The wicked," which is the very import of their name, "are as a troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Here is no governing principle in any power; no sceptre, no trident to check and allay the rage of those waters. But when his power goes forth in the soul, whose very word winds and seas obey, how peaceful and pleasant a calm doth ensue!

Now is a man restored to himself, and is again in his right mind. He is truly now said to enjoy himself, and upon the best terms; that is, he enjoys himself in and under God. He is, in a due subordination, master of himself. He possesses his own soul; that one piece of holy rectitude, patience, enables him to do so. "In your patience possess ye your souls."[1] Patience is a part of fortitude, an ability to suffer. He that is in this respect impotent of himself, not able to suffer, is a perfect slave: not a slave only to the vicious wills and humours of other men, in whose power he apprehends it is to befriend or hurt him, but first and chiefly to his own; he is not master of his own judgment, reason, and conscience, but he prostitutes all in the first place to his own inordinate self-love, his avarice, his fear, and consequently to the pleasure of other men,—which, upon no other terms and in-

[1] Luke xxi. 19.

ducements, is base and vile towards any man, were the matter in itself never so right, and the obedience as due to them as can be supposed; whereas, if he could suffer, he retained his mastery over himself, and were, under God, within his own power. Upon this, with other grounds, is *joyfulness*[1] a companion of *patience;* how much more is it so,—if to this one part,—to the whole frame of that holy rectitude whereby a man's spirit is composed to a due order within itself; when there is a universal sobriety (or soundness of mind, as the word that uses to express *sobriety* signifies), a confidency and dominion of one's self, and the soul is no longer hurried to and fro, and even outed of itself, by undue desires, fears, angers, sorrows, etc., nor vexed by the absence of, and its perverse ineptitude and indisposition to, those which it well knows are due; when it finds itself at liberty from the exactions of an unsubdued flesh, and for the kindly and genuine operations and exercises of the divine life; when it is in good measure freed from the rackings and tortures that naturally accompany the habitual contrariety of an ungovernable heart to a convinced judgment and conscience, and is no longer held in pain by such continual self-upbraidings,—"Thou art, and affectest to be, what thou knowest thou shouldst not; and neither art, nor dost, nor canst desire or endure to be, or do, what thou very well knowest thou shouldst"! In that case the soul is throughout disjointed, and continually grating upon itself. And the ease and pleasure which it finds by this happy change much resembles that which a man's body, being in such a case, feels, when every dislocated bone is brought back, and well settled in its own proper place and order again. How resentingly doth the psalmist acknowledge divine goodness in this! "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake;"[2] *q. d.* 'Now I can walk and act as a sound man, and the paths of righteousness are become pleasant and delectable to me, which before I declined, or

[1] Col. i. 11.

[2] Ps. xxiii. 3.

wherein my halt and maimed soul was unable to move a step.' Now is 'heard the voice of joy and gladness,' when 'the bones which were disordered and broken rejoice.'[1]

How great is the joy and pleasure of *self-activity!* when the soul is not moved by foreign, improper motives, but finds itself to move freely from an implanted principle of life, that acts it forward in right and plain paths; when it doth with its own full consent what it is convinced it ought, without being forcibly dragged or violently imposed upon; and is not a weak, ineffectual, or only self-judging, but a powerful governing, vital law to itself.

How great pleasure arises from a constant, diligent *self-inspection!* when a man's spirit dwells within itself, resides at home, seeks not itself abroad, remains within its own bounds, is intent upon itself, watches over its own motions as its proper charge, is formed to a compliance with that precept, "Keep thy heart with all diligence,"[2] and upon that consideration, as seriously weighing that thence are "the issues of life," all vital acts and operations whatsoever will savour of the root and principle from whence they proceed, and be as the heart is; good and pure if that be so,—if otherwise, corrupt and naught:—to have a spirit habituated to the business of its own province and territory; its eyes, not with "the fool's in the ends of the earth," but turned inward upon itself. Hence his own vineyard is best kept; when the sluggard's, that neglects himself, is wholly overrun with thorns and briers that cover the face thereof. How forlorn and comfortless a spectacle hath such a man of his own soul! the horror whereof is only avoided by the more hopeless course of turning off his eye, as conscious how ill entertainment is there to be met with. Therefore are such, strangers at home, and are afraid to converse with themselves,—are better acquainted with the affairs of France and Spain, or at least of this and that and the other neighbour, than those of their own souls. And the more things at home are

[1] Ps. li. 8. [2] Prov. iv. 23.

neglected, the worse they grow. Poverty and desolation come upon them as an armed man, that, in this case, wastes and makes havoc without resistance.

And herein lies much of the heart-rectifying work and power of grace, in disposing and setting the heart so far right towards itself as that it may first have the *patience* to look inward, and then the *pleasure* which will afterwards arise most naturally thence. The great aversion hereto of misgiving hearts is not otherwise overcome. But when it is, how do all things flourish under such a one's careful, self-reflecting eye! That soul is as a watered garden. Thither it can invite His presence, who is altogether made up of delights, to come and eat his pleasant fruits. And now, retirement and solitude become delectable, and a man delightfully associates with himself,—singles out himself to be his own companion, as finding *another* always stepping in; so that he is never less alone than when alone. How unspeakable a happiness is this, when the great Mediator, that undertook to reconcile God to the soul, shall thus have also reconciled it to itself! When it shall be considered how dreadful the case is when a man's wickedness hath transformed him into a *Magor-missabib*,[1]—compassed him with affrightments, made him a *terror to himself*,—it may then be understood how grateful a change it is when he is reformed into a son of peace, and made a delight to himself; when he can recreate himself, and refresh his tired eye, overcharged with beholding the sad things that everywhere come in view from a world lost in wickedness, by looking into God's own plantation within himself. And considering it under that notion only, he doth not look upon himself with an eye of pride, as he doth not upon others with that of disdain. He beholds with a sort of self-complacency what God hath wrought and done there,—not with self-arrogance, as knowing there is a self too, upon which he hath still reason to look with abhorrence and self-loathing; and though there be now

[1] Jerem. xx. 3.

incorporated with him a better self, yet that was not of himself. He well understands who made him differ, not only from others, but from himself; and put him into that capacity of saying that *I am not I*,—I am not who or what I was before. And the more he is used to such self-reflection, the more pleasant it becomes to him; that is, if he confine not his eye too much to the dark side of his own soul, and do look to the more lightsome side, with that remembrance, as before, that whatsoever he is that is good and grateful to behold, he is by grace. He thus grows familiar with himself, and the sight mends as it is oftener beheld; and while it is not observed always to do so. Yea, though things look many times sadly, and sometimes dubiously, that, however, doth but occasion the accomplishment of a more diligent search, which engages to more earnest labour and strugglings with God and with himself; which labour is recompensed with a following fruit and pleasure: yea, and God is invocated not only for redress, but for further search; when such fear lest they have been too indulgent and partial towards themselves, and lest they have not made so strict a scrutiny as the case may possibly require, then the request is, "Search and try me, O LORD; see if there be any way of wickedness in me." And here the sincerity which appears in that self-suspicion, and jealousy over their own souls, is not without its grateful relishes, and a secret delight insinuates and mingles with the appeal which such a soul makes to Him whose eye is a flame of fire,—searches hearts and tries reins. And it is some pleasure, however, to find that disposition in their own souls, that they are thoroughly willing to know themselves, and desire not to shun and decline the search of that fiery, flaming eye.

Thus then, upon all accounts, this divine communication is delectable, as it tends to rectify men's dispositions towards themselves, and to set them right in their inclinations and posture in reference to their own souls. We may add,—

Fourthly, It contributes much to the matter of delight, as it sets men's spirits *right in their dispositions towards this and*

the other world,—the present and future state of things. How great a work is necessary to be done in this respect, wherein things are so monstrously out of course, and men become, thereby, not strangers only to true delight and pleasure, but even uncapable of any such relishes, till the matter be redressed! How vitiated and unexercised are men's senses as to these things, and unable to discern between good and evil! Their grosser sense is utterly incompetent, and a spiritual, more refined sense is wanting; therefore do they judge, and choose, and love, and pursue, only as that most incompetent and injudicious principle doth direct: *that* is appealed to in all cases,—all their measures are taken from thence; and that only is called good, which to their sensual imagination, tinctured by the earthliness and carnality of their hearts, appears so; that evil, of which the same principle doth so pronounce: according hereto is the whole bent and inclination of their souls. And they are only influenced and governed by the powers of this sensible world,—this present evil world, "the fashion whereof," yea, it and the lusts thereof together, are "passing away;" and the things of the world to come have no power with them; no motives from thence signify anything. They are only steered, in their whole course, by the apprehension they have of advantages or disadvantages in reference to their present secular concernments. They love this world, and the things of this world,—"mind earthly things," and are not startled when they are so plainly told that men of this character "have not the love of the Father in them," and are "enemies to the cross of Christ," and that their "end will be destruction." It is a death to them to think of dying; not from the fear of what may ensue,—they have atheism enough to stifle such fear,—but from the love of their earthly stations, and that vile, earthly body in which they dwell.

But how delightful a thing is the change which this rectifying communication makes! How pleasant to live in this world as a pilgrim and stranger, seeking still the better, the heavenly country! To behold the various enticements which

are here offered to view, at some times, without inclination towards them; the frightful aspect and appearance of things, at other times, without commotion;—is not this delectable? to dwell apart from this world in the midst of it,—in the "secret of the Almighty,"[1]—"under his pavilion,"[2]—as one of his hidden ones; withdrawn from the communion of this world to his own communion; so severed and cut off from this world, as not to partake in the spirit of it, or be acted thereby, but by another, a greater and more mighty, as well as a purer and more holy Spirit? "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."[3] And again, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God,"[4]—which things the divine Spirit disposes the soul to, and unites it with, when it disinclines and disjoins it from this world and the things thereof; and thereby discovers this soul to be quite of another community from that of this world, namely, of a heavenly community, unto which those better and more excellent things do lie in common, as their portion and inheritance. What matter of joy and glorying is it, when one is "crucified to this world, and this world to him,"[5] when the world appears to him a "crucified" thing;—that is, an 'accursed, hateful, detestable' thing (which is one notion of crucified), such a thing as he can despise and hate; which he is as little apt to be fond of, as one would be of a loathsome carcass hanging upon an ignominious cross: and when he can feel himself crucified towards it;—that is, 'dead' (another notion of it), disinclined, without sense, breath, pulse, motion, or appetite; not so dead as to be without any kind of life, but without that base, low, sordid kind of life by which he *lived to it*, and in its converses and embraces! So much of delectation doth this infer, as even to endear the very cross itself,—that hateful, horrid thing,—by which it is effected. But that carries a further signification with it, to be fetched more

[1] Ps. xci. 1. [2] *Ibid.* xxvii. 5. [3] 1 John iv. 4.
[4] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [5] Gal. vi. 14.

expressly from other scriptures;—the cross is itself rendered amiable, and a thing to be gloried in, to be looked on with delight and pleasure, upon the account of the design and end of that tragedy which was acted thereon: within which design, being executed and accomplished, this happy effect is included. We elsewhere find the Apostle expressing his vehement desire to "know Christ, and the power of his resurrection;" and, in order thereto, the "fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death."[1] But what did he lastly aim at in this? The next words more fully speak out, what he first mentioned, "the power of his resurrection" to be the thing chiefly in his eye; and that he desired, what he adds, "the fellowship of his sufferings," etc., as a means unto that end, though it seemed a sharp and painful means: "If by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead;"[2] *q. d.* 'I care not what I undergo, not the sufferings even of a painful crucifixion itself, or that my worldly, earthly self do suffer conformably to the sufferings of my crucified Lord; I matter not by what so severe method the thing be brought about, if by any means it may be brought about, that I may know the power of his resurrection so feelingly as to attain also the resurrection of the dead.' And what was that? No doubt to attain a state —which he confesses he had not yet perfectly attained, but was in pursuit of—suitable to his relation and union with a risen Jesus; union with him supposes a being risen with him,—"If ye then be risen with Christ;"[3]—it is taken as a granted thing, that they that are his are risen with him. And what state and temper of spirit would be suitable to that supposition, the next words show: "Seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection," or "mind," "on the things above, not on the things on earth." Then follows the method in which they were brought to the capacity of doing so: "For ye are dead." Their professed relation to Christ did suppose them

[1] Phil. iii. 10. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 11. [3] Col. iii. 1.

risen, and did therefore first suppose them *dead*. Now if they would do suitably to what their profession imported, this was it they had to do:—to abstract their minds and hearts from the things of this earth, and place them upon the things of a higher region; and, as it is afterwards expressed in this same context which we were considering before, "to have our conversation," or "citizenship," "in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour."[1] That is, as our chief interests and privileges are above, to have our thoughts and the powers of our souls chiefly exercised upon that blessed and glorious state; which state is "the prize," mentioned above, "of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;"[2] it being the scope and import of his call unto us, and the very design of his sufferings on the cross, to draw up a people from earth to heaven;—whence, therefore, they that under this call do still "mind earthly things," are said to be "enemies to the cross of Christ;"[3] the great incongruity whereof the Apostle even resents with tears, as he there testifies. And it was in this that he was, for his part, so willing to comply with the design of the cross, that he made no difficulty to endure all the hardship and dolour of it, that he might attain this glorious fruit and gain, which he reckoned should accrue to him from it,—even more of a raised, heavenly mind; which signified it to be strongly bent that way already, when no mortifications were reckoned too severe to be undergone in order thereto. And here, therefore, this soul-rectifying influence must be understood to have been proportionably strong.

Hence, also, it was that we find him groaning, as one under a pressure or heavy weight, to be "clothed upon with the heavenly house," and to have "mortality swallowed up of life:"[4] because God had wrought him to this "selfsame thing," so bent and determined his spirit was towards the blessedness of the future state,—which seems the most natural contexture of discourse here, though some others have under-

[1] Phil. iii. 20.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 14.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 18, 19.
[4] 2 Cor. v. 2—5.

stood it otherwise,—as that, though he could bear patiently the delay, he could not but desire most earnestly to be there. And we see how the temper of the primitive Christians was, as to this and the other world, in those days when the Spirit was plentifully poured out: "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves they had in heaven a far better and an enduring substance."[1] Heaven signified much with them, and this world very little. They "looked not to the things that were seen and temporal, but to the things unseen and eternal,"[2] as those former worthies did, whose minds and hearts being set right by that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,"[3] they lived as pilgrims and strangers on earth; despised the pleasures, riches, and honours of it; endured all manner of hardships and tortures in it, "not accepting deliverance;" because they were taken up in the pursuit of the "better country," had respect to "the recompense of reward," and expected a part in the better resurrection. And is it not a delightful thing to the spirit of a man, when he is sensibly disentangled and at liberty from the cares, desires, griefs, and fears, that were wont to inwrap his heart; when he finds his weights and clogs fallen off that depressed him,—the bonds and snares loosed which bound him down to this earth; and feels himself ascending and moving upwards, out of that darkness, stupidity, and death, that possessed his soul, into that upper region of light, purity, and peace, unto which his spirit is still gradually more and more connaturalized day by day; when heaven, in respect of the pure holiness, the calm serenity, the rest and blessedness of it, is now grown familiar to him, and his very element?

We see, then, that in all these mentioned respects, this gracious communication, wherein it is rectifying, and tends to settle the soul in that frame which it ought to be in, and which is most proper and natural to it; therein it is also most delightful, and carries highest matter of pleasure in it.

[1] Heb. x 34. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 18. [3] Heb. xi. 1.

It is, upon the whole,—that we may sum up the account of this divine communication in the following characters of it,—

1. *Generative,* and begets the soul to a new, a divine life; makes it of a sluggish, stupid, dead thing,—as it was towards all heavenly and divine matters,—living and sprightly, full of active life and vigour. Life, we say, is sweet; it is in itself a pleasant thing. This mean, bodily life itself is so, if we do but consider it, and allow ourselves to taste and enjoy the pleasure of it;—as, for instance, that this and that limb and member is not a dead lump,—that we feel life freshly sprouting and springing in every part,—is not this delightsome? How much more the life of the soul, especially this so excellent and sublime kind of life! And it is the radical principle of all other consequent pleasure, that by which we are capable thereof: everything is sapless and without savour to the dead. How pleasant operations and fruitions doth the divine life render a person capable of!

2. It is *nutritive.* Souls are nourished by the same thing by which they are begotten,—by the same divine influence. As a generative virtue is wont to be attributed to the sun, so it cherishes also its own productions. The beams of that Sun of righteousness[1] make them that fear God "grow up as calves in the stall," "fill them with marrow and fatness," cause them to "flourish as the cedars of Lebanon." And is not that delightsome, to be increased daily with the increases of God; fed with heavenly, hidden manna, angels' food; and thereby—though we need not here speak distinctly of these—to receive at once both nourishment and growth?

3. It is *sanative,* and virtually contains all the fruits in it which are "for the healing of the nations:" when the soul grows distempered, it restores it, and is both sustaining and remedying to it. How great is the pleasure of health and soundness! of ease to broken bones! of relief to a sick and fainting heart! So it is often—for in the present state the

[1] Mal. iv. 2.

cure is not perfect, and relapses are frequent—with the soul in which the life of God hath begun to settle and diffuse itself, till his influence repair and renew it: and when it doth so, how pleasant is it to find a heart made sound in his statutes, and to perceive a new working in it,—the "spirit of love, power, and a sound mind!"[1] so pleasant that it occasions a triumph, even when the outward man is perishing, if it be found that the inward is renewed day by day.

4. It is *corroborative* and *strengthening;* confirms resolutions, and establishes the heart. Hereby they who have felt this quickening, cherishing, healing virtue, are also strengthened with "might," namely, by "the Spirit," "in the inner man;" so that they "hold on their way, and being of clean hands, grow stronger and stronger."[2] "They go from strength to strength;"[3] and do not so much spend as increase it by going forward: for the "way itself of the LORD is strength to the upright."[4] He provides that fresh recruits shall still spring up to them in their way,—for all their supplies are of him, and are acknowledged to be so,—inasmuch as, by waiting upon the Lord, "they renew strength, and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting."[5] And this increasing strength cannot be without a proportionably increasing delight. How pleasantly doth the strong man rejoice to run his race, and enterprise even difficult and hazardous things! By this strength doth the regenerate man perform the ordinary duties belonging to his holy profession; by it he encounters difficulties, combats and conquers enemies, bears heavy and afflicting pressures; and none of these without some intermingled pleasure: for even that exercise of this strength which is likely to be least accompanied with pleasure—the suffering of sharp and smarting afflictions—hath many times much of this grateful mixture; and can only be expected to have it in this way of gracious communication, as the depending sufferers shall be "strengthened

[1] 2 Tim. i. 7; 2 Cor. iv. [2] Job xvii. 9. [3] Ps. lxxxiv. 7.
[4] Prov. x. 29. [5] Isa. xl. 31.

with all might, according to the glorious power of God, unto all patience and longsuffering, with joyfulness."[1]

God is therefore to be enjoyed and delighted in by this delectable communication intervening, by which he now frames the soul according to his own image, and gives a heart after his own heart; that is, such as is suitable to him, and as he would have it be. And this way only is any one in a possibility to delight in God, by having a good frame of spirit communicated to him, and inwrought in him;—I mean, never without this, and in a great measure by it. Then is he in a happy state, when God hath by his own Spirit made him what by his word he requires him to be. Now is he composed to delights and blessedness, being by the same workmanship "created in Christ Jesus," both to "good works" and to the best of enjoyments. How happy is that soul in whom the true matter of delight is become an implanted thing! that is what it should be, and should be nothing—such is the constitution of gospel rules and precepts—but what most truly makes for its own content, delight, and rest! whose own temper is now in some sort become to it both a law and a reward! Surely this is one great part of what an enlightened, apprehensive soul would most earnestly desire and crave, or would be the genuine breathings of a sincerely gracious heart: 'O that I were more like God! more perfectly framed according to his holy will!' and must therefore be, in great part, a thing apt to afford it delight and rest; as hath been already inculcated before.

But yet this natural consequence is little understood. And the common ignorance or inadvertency of this, hath made it necessary to insist the more largely—though but little hath been said in respect of what might—on this part of the delectable communication wherein God offers himself to his people's enjoyment. For from the not knowing, or not considering of this way of enjoying him, this twofold mistake —the one of very dangerous, the other of uncomfortable importance and tendency—hath arisen:

[1] Col. i. 11.

First, That some have thought they have enjoyed God when they have not; having only had their imaginations somewhat gratified, by certain either false or ineffectual notions of him; in which they have rested, and placed the sum of their religion and happiness; never aiming, in the meantime, to have their spirits reformed according to that pure and holy image and exemplar which he hath represented in the gospel of his Son; the impression whereof is, *Christ formed in us.*

Secondly, That others have thought they have not enjoyed God when they have; supposing there was no enjoyment of him but what consisted in the rapturous, transporting apprehension and persuasion of his particular love to them; and slightly overlooking all that work he hath wrought in their souls, as if it were nothing to be accounted of; not allowing themselves to reflect on anything in themselves but what was still amiss; and vainly seeking with much anxiety and complaint what they have, while they will not take notice that they have it, nor apply themselves to improve the already implanted principles that are, in themselves, apt to yield fruits of so pleasant relish.

It was upon this account requisite to discover, and labour somewhat to magnify, the intrinsical delightfulness of religion itself; and to put the more of note and remark upon a well-tempered spirit, even in point of delectableness and the matter of pleasure it hath in it, by how much it is with too many, on one account or another, a neglected thing.

There is only somewhat of *doubt* or *objection,* that may possibly lie in the minds of some against the scope and drift of this discourse; which it will be needful we endeavour to remove before we proceed to what is further contained in this gracious communication: as,—

First, It may be said, 'Doth not all this tend to bring us, instead of delighting in God, to delight in ourselves; to make us become our own centre and rest? And how can the relishable sweetness of gracious principles and dispositions

signify God's being to be enjoyed or delighted in? For what, are these things God?' To this I only say:—

1. That such holy dispositions, as they are not God, so nor are they, in strictness of speech, ourselves. And how absurd were it to call everything *ourselves* that is *in us!* And how self-contradicting, then, were the very objection! for that would make delighting in God and in ourselves directly all one; and so the fault which it causelessly pretends to find it would really commit. It is true that, improperly, holy dispositions are said to make up another self in us, *a new man;* according as corrupt and sinful principles and dispositions do make also a self, *the old man.* But then it is also to be remembered, that with no greater impropriety they are capable of bearing the name of *God;* as the image of anything frequently doth the name of the thing which it represents, or the work of its author; and they are expressly called, *Christ formed in us;* and is not he God? They are called *the Spirit;* for when we are cautioned not to "quench the Spirit," how can that be understood of the eternal, uncreated Spirit himself? And the very thing produced—not merely the productive influence—in the work of regeneration is expressly called by that name (as it is no such strange thing for the effect to carry the name of its cause): "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."[1] There is Spirit begetting, and spirit begotten. And the spirit begotten, as it must be distinguished from its cause, the Spirit of God, so it must from the subject wherein the effect is wrought, our own spirits; for they, sure, are not *produced* by the regenerating work. Yea, and when God is said to "dwell in them that dwell in love," and that are humble and contrite, somewhat else is thereby signified to be indwelling there than the mere being of God; for otherwise the privilege of such were no greater than of all other men and things. And what else is it, but somewhat communicated and imparted immediately from God to such, else how, by dwelling in

[1] John iii. 6.

love, do they dwell in God? which, because dwelling imports permanency, cannot be a transient influence only, but some settled, abiding effect, a consistent frame and temper of spirit, maintained by his continually renewed influence: and therefore it would be very unreasonably said, that the representing this as delectable is a calling us off from God to delight in ourselves. For if this communication be not itself, in strict propriety, *God*, it were as great impropriety to say it were *ourselves*. Again,—

2. It hath a great deal more affinity with God than with us. We are, it is true, the subjects of it; but it is his *immediate production and very likeness*,—a divine nature, no human thing. Therefore, if here our delight were to terminate, it were more proper to call it delighting in God than in ourselves. But,—

3. It is neither said nor meant that here our delight is to terminate; but that hereby we are to delight in God, and so that our delight is to terminate in *him*.

4. When we are said to enjoy God, I inquire, is anything communicated to us, or no? If not, we have no enjoyment; if anything be, what is it? God's essence?—that is impossible, and horrid to think, as hath been said. And we need not repeat, that when we can tell what it is to enjoy a friend, without partaking his essence, whose communications are so incomparably more remote, mediate, resistible, it is less difficult to conceive how God is to be enjoyed by his communications.

Secondly, It may be again said, 'But if God be thus to be delighted in, how can delighting in him be upon such terms our duty? for is it our duty that he communicate himself in this way to us?' Let any that object thus, only study the meaning of those precepts: "Keep yourselves in the love of God;" "Continue in his goodness;" "Be ye filled with the Spirit;" "Walk in the Spirit;"—and if they can think them to signify anything, they will not be to seek for an answer. But to this more hereafter; when from the delightful object, we come to treat of actual delighting in it.

Thirdly, But some may say, 'It were indeed to be acknowledged that such a temper of spirit, once communicated, were indeed very delightful, but where is it to be found? And to state the matter of delight so much in what is to be sought in ourselves, is to reduce the whole business of delighting in God to an impossibility, or to nothing; so little appearing of this temper, and so much of the contrary, as gives much cause of doubt whether there be anything to be rejoiced in or no. And what then? Are we to suspend the exercise of this duty till we have gotten the difficult case resolved,—which may be all our time,—*Is there a real, thorough work of God upon my soul or no?* For how can I rejoice in that whereof I have yet a doubt whether it be what it seems or no?' I answer,—

1. It is plain, they that really have nothing of this communication from God, cannot take delight in it,—otherwise than as hoped for. But,—

2. Would we therefore have such to please themselves and be satisfied without it; and delight in their distance and estrangement from God, and while there is no intercourse between him and them? And shall this be called, too, delighting in God? Surely somewhat else than delight belongs to their states.

3. But for such as really have it, that which hath been designed to be evinced is, that it is delectable in itself; and therefore they cannot be without any taste or relish of pleasure therein, while yet some doubt touching the sincerity and truth thereof doth yet remain; though such doubt—but more their imperfect reception of this communication, and neglect to look after further degrees of it—cannot but render their delight comparatively little. Nor hath it been designed to speak hitherto of what delight the regenerate in this way actually have, but what they *may have;* and what matter of delight God's heart-rectifying communication doth in the nature of it contain,—that is, supposing it were imparted and received, so as actually to have formed the soul according to the gospel-revelation. And if it were so in a more eminent

measure and degree, it were then in itself so delectable, as without the assurance of our future safe and happy state, (though that, in that case, is not likely to be in a comfortable degree wanting,) that is, not by *it only*, but by *itself*, without the present, constant, necessary concurrence thereof,—to afford unspeakable pleasure to that soul in which it hath place. So that the getting of assurance is not the only thing to be done in order to a person's delighting in God; of which more hereafter is intended to be said, in the directive part.

But though that be not the only thing, yet it is a very great thing; and being superadded, makes a great addition to the matter of delight: therefore we further say,—

THIRDLY, This divine communication is delectable, as it includes in it *the manifestation of God's love to the soul in particular.*

Nor do we hereby intend an *enthusiastical assurance;* or such a testification of the love of God to the soul as excludes any reference to his external revelation, and exercise of our own enlightened reason and judgment thereupon; or wherein these are of no use, nor have subservience thereto. But as in the other parts of the divine communication his external revelation hath the place of an instrument whereby he effects the work inwardly done upon the mind and heart, and of a rule or measure whereby we are to judge of it; so we are to account it is as to this part of it also;—that is, he inwardly testifies and manifests the *same thing* which is virtually contained in his gospel-revelation, considered in that reference and aspect which it hath on the present state of the soul. For that outward revelation must needs be understood to signify diversely to particular persons, as their state may be diverse: as when it says, the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, God hath prepared for *them that love* him;"[1] to a person that doth indeed truly love God it virtually says, 'All these things

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9.

are prepared for thee.' To one that doth not love God it can only be understood to say, 'All these things may be thine,—that is, if thou shalt love him; if thou do not, thou hast no part in them.' But inasmuch as a conditional promise, when the condition is performed, is equivalent to an absolute, these words do as truly import this sense to one that loves God, 'These things are thine,' as if they were directed to it in particular. As *truly*, I say, supposing the person do truly love God; but not so *clearly*, or with that evidence. For this truth, supposing it a truth, 'I do sincerely love God,' is not so evident as this, that such preparation is made for them that do: for this is expressly contained in the word of God; the other is not so, but to be collected only by self-inspection, and observation of the bent and tenor of my spirit and way God-ward. Yet however the evidence of truth admits of degrees, truth itself doth not. All things that are true are equally true. And, therefore, when it is said, 'So great things are prepared for them that love God,' it as truly said, 'They are prepared for this man who loves God;' as this or that particular lover of God is contained in the general notion of a lover of him. And then, as that public declaration says not to any, 'These things are prepared for you whether you love God or no,' or otherwise than as they come under that common notion of lovers of God; this inward manifestation is also so accommodate to that, as that it says not another thing, but the same,—that is, nothing that contradicts (and indeed no more than is virtually contained in) the other; or it applies what is generally said of the lovers of God to this particular lover of him *as such*,—that is, enabling him to discern himself a lover of him impresses this truth powerfully upon the heart, '*These great preparations belong to thee as thou art such a one.*'

We speak not here of what God *can do*, but *what he doth*. Who can doubt but, as God can, if he please, imprint on the mind the whole system of necessary truth, and on the heart the entire frame of holiness, without the help of an external revelation, so he can imprint this particular persuasion

also without any outward means? Nor do we speak of what he more rarely doth but of what he doth ordinarily, or what his more usual course and way of procedure is in dealing with the spirits of men. The supreme power binds not its own hands. We may be sure the inward testimony of the Spirit never is opposite to the outward testimony of his gospel which is the Spirit's testimony also; and therefore it never says to an unholy man, an enemy to God, 'Thou art in a reconciled and pardoned state.' But we cannot be sure he never speaks nor suggests things to the spirits of men but by the external testimony, so as to make use of that as the means of informing them with what he hath to impart; nay, we know he sometimes hath imparted things—as to prophets and the sacred penmen—without any external means; and, no doubt, excited suitable affections in them, to the import of the things imparted and made known.

Nor do I believe it can ever be proved that he *never* doth immediately testify his own special love to holy souls without the intervention of some part of his external word, made use of as a present instrument to that purpose, or that he *always* doth it in the way of methodical reasoning therefrom.

Nor do I think that the experience of Christians can signify much to the deciding of the matter. For besides that this, or that, or a third person's experience cannot conclude anything against a fourth's; and the way of arguing were very infirm, 'What one or two, or a thousand, or even the greater part of serious Christians,—even such as have attained to some satisfying evidence of their own good estate,—have not found, *that* nowhere is to be found;' besides that, I say, it is likely that few can distinctly tell how it hath been with them in this matter,—that is, what way or method hath been taken with them in begetting a present persuasion at this or that time of God's peculiar love to them. His dealings with persons—even the same persons at divers times—may be so various; his illapses and coming in upon them at some times may have been so sudden and surprising; the motions of thought are so quick; the observation or animadversion

persons usually have of what is transacted in their own spirits is so indistinct; and they may be so much taken up with the thing itself, as less to mind the way and order of doing it; that we may suppose little is to be gathered thence towards the settling of a stated rule in this case. Nor is the matter of such moment that we need either be curious in inquiring or positive in determining about it; that principle being once supposed and firmly stuck to,—that he never says anything in this matter by his Spirit to the hearts of men repugnant to what the same Spirit hath said in his word; or, that he doth not say a new or a diverse thing from what he hath said there for their assurance;—that is, that he never testifies to any person by his Spirit that he is accepted and beloved of him, who may at the same time be concluded, by his publicly extant constitutions in his word, to be in a state of non-acceptance and disfavour; or concerning whom the same thing—namely, his acceptance—might not be concluded by his word, if it were duly applied to his case. Hereby the most momentous danger in this matter is avoided; for, if that principle be forelaid, enough is done to preclude the vain boasts of such as may be apt to pretend highly to great manifestations of divine love, while they carry with them manifest proofs of an unsanctified heart, and are under the power of unmortified, reigning sin. That principle admitted, will convince that their boasted manifestations do only manifest their own ignorance, pride, and vanity; or proceed only from their heated imagination, or—the worst cause—Satanical illusion, designed to lull them asleep in sin, and the more easily to lead them blindfold to perdition. And this is the main concernment about which we need to be solicitous in this matter; which being provided for,—as it is difficult, so it is not necessary, to determine whether the Spirit do always not only testify *according to* the external revelation, but *by it* also, and so only as to concur in the usual way of reasoning from it.

No doubt but the same truth may be assented to upon divers grounds,—sometimes upon rational evidence, sometimes upon

testimony ; and some truths may be seen by immediate mental intuition, as being self-evident, which also may be capable of demonstration. And though this truth of God's particular love to such a man be none of those that have self-evidence, yet God's Spirit, as it may by assisting the discursive faculty, help us to discern the connections of some things which otherwise we should not perceive ; so it may, by assisting the intuitive, make things evident to us that of themselves are not. Nor yet, also, that it *actually doth* so, can any, I believe, certainly tell ; for admit that at some times some have very transporting apprehensions of the love of God towards themselves, suggested to their hearts by the Holy Spirit, they having this habitual knowledge before,—that love to him, for instance, or faith in him, or the like, are descriptive characters of the persons whom he accepts and delightfully loves,—how suddenly may the divine light irradiate, or shine upon those preconceived notions, which were begotten in them by the interveniency of the external revelation before, and excite those before-implanted principles of faith, love, etc., so as to give them the lively sense of them now stirring and acting in their hearts ; and thence also enable them unwaveringly to conclude, and with an unexpressible joy and pleasure, their own interest in his special love ; in this way "shedding it abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them."[1] This may be so suddenly done, that they may apprehend the testimony to be immediate, when indeed it is not.

Nor are they able to prove from Scripture the immediateness of it ; for as to what it doth to them in particular, Scripture says nothing, they not being so much as mentioned there. What it doth, or hath done, to this or that person there mentioned, signifies nothing to their case, if anything were said that must have that import,—which will be hard to evince ; and that it is anywhere in Scripture signified to be its usual way, in common, towards them on whose hearts it impresses

[1] Rom. v. 5.

this persuasion, to do it immediately, is much less to be evinced. For what scripture saith so? and that famous text that speaks so directly to this matter, "The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," seemeth rather to imply the contrary, inasmuch as the Spirit of God is there expressly said to "co-witness with our Spirit," as the word there used signifies; by which it would seem to take the same course in testifying, which our spirit or conscience doth,—that is, of considering the general characters of his children laid down in his word, reflecting upon the same in ourselves, and thereupon concluding we are his children: which if it were supposed the only thing the Spirit of God ordinarily doth in this matter, we may with much confidence assert:—

1. That it doth herein *no small thing;* for is it a small thing to be ascertained of God's fatherly love to us as his own children?

2. That it doth *not a less thing* than if it testified the same matter in a way altogether immediate. For wherein is it less? Is the matter *less important?* that cannot be said; for the thing we are assured of is the same, howsoever we be certified thereof. Is it *less evident?* that can with as little pretence be said; for doth any one account a thing not evident in itself, and that needs to be proved to him some way or other, the less evident for being proved to him in a discursive way? What pretence can any one have to say or think so? Is it that reasoning is more liable to error and mistake? but I hope the reasoning of God's Spirit is not so, when *it* enables us to apprehend the general truth we should reason from; to assume to it; to collect and conclude from it, guiding us by its own light: in each of these surely we have as much reason to rely upon the certainty and infallibility of the Spirit's reasonings, as of its most assertory dictates; otherwise we would, most unreasonably, think the authority of those conclusions laid down in the Epistle to the Romans, and other parts of Scripture, invalidated by the Holy Ghost's

vouchsafing to reason them out to us, as we know it most nervously and strongly doth. Or, is it *less consolatory?* that cannot be, for that depends on the two former, the importance and evidence of the thing declared; the former whereof is the same, the latter not less.

3. Yea, and supposing that the Holy Ghost do manifestly concur with our spirits in the several steps of that discursive way, so that we can observe it to do so (and there is little doubt but it may do so as observably to us, by affording a more than ordinary light to assist and guide us in each part of that procedure, as if it did only suggest a sudden dictate to us and no more), we may upon that supposition add, that it doth hereby more advantageously propose the same thing to us, than if it only did it the other way. It doth it in a way *more suitable to our natures,*—which is not nothing; and it doth it in *a way less liable to after-suspicion and doubt.* For it is not supposed to be always dictating the same thing; and when it ceases to do so, howsoever consolatory and satisfying the dictate was at that instant when it was given, the matter is liable to question afterwards, Upon what grounds was such a thing said? And though it cannot be distrusted, that what the Holy Spirit testifieth is true, yet I may doubt whether it was indeed the Holy Spirit that testified it or no. Whereas if it proceeded with me upon grounds, *they* remain, and I have no reason to suspect that which was argued out to me upon grounds which I still find in me, was either from an ill suggestor or with an ill design; whereas there may be some plausible pretence of doubt in the matter, if there was only a transient dictate given in to me, without any reference or appeal to that rule by which God hath not only directed me to try myself, but also to "try spirits whether they be of him or no."

Nor is there any imaginable necessity of assigning quite another method to the Spirit's work as it is a Spirit of adoption, from that which it holds as it is a Spirit of bondage. For as to this latter, when it *convinces* a person, and binds down the condemning sentence upon him, this surely is the

course it follows,—To let a person see, for instance, "They that live after the flesh shall die;" but thou livest after the flesh, therefore thou shalt die:—or, All that "believe not, the wrath of God abides" on them; but thou believest not, (as it is, we know, the Spirit's work to convince of not believing,) therefore the wrath of God abides on thee. And what need is there of apprehending its method to be quite another in its *comforting* work? Nor is it, surely, a matter of less difficulty to persuade some that they are unbelievers, and make them apprehend and feel the terror suitable to their states, than others that they are believers, and make them apprehend the comfort which is proper to theirs. Yea, and is not its course the same in its whole *sanctifying* work,—to bring home the particular truth whose impression it would leave on the soul, with application thereof to it in particular? which, as generally propounded in Scripture, men are so apt to waive and neglect; for what is every one's concern is commonly thought no one's: and what need that its method here should be wholly diverse? But in whichsoever of these ways the Spirit of God doth manifest his love, it is not to be doubted but that—

There is such a thing in itself very necessary, and to be attained and sought after; and that it is highly delectable when he doth vouchsafe it.

1. That *there is such a thing to be sought after* as a communicable privilege and favour to holy souls, is evident enough from multitudes of scriptures. Those that have been occasionally mentioned, in speaking (what was thought fit to be said) of the way of his doing it, need not to be repeated; unto which we may add what we find is added to those above-recited words, "Eye hath not seen, etc., the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," namely, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."[1] And that Spirit not only gives those lovers of God above mentioned a clearer view of the things prepared for them, so as that the

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

nature of them might be the more distinctly understood (as is argued in the latter part of this, and in the following verse), but also of their own propriety and interest in them: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God."[1] Whence, therefore, they are revealed by the Spirit, not as pleasing objects in themselves only, but as gifts, the evidences and issues of divine love,—their own proper portion, by the bequest of that love, to whom they are shown. Nor is this the work of the Spirit only, as inditing the Scriptures; but it is such a work as helps to the spiritual discerning of these things,—such as whereto the natural man is not competent, who yet is capable of reading the Scriptures as well as other men. And what will we make of those words of our Saviour, when, having told his disciples he would "pray the Father, and he should give them another Comforter, that he might abide with them for ever, even the Spirit of truth," etc., he adds, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you,"—that is, as is plain, by that Spirit; and then shortly after subjoins, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him"?[2] Here is an express promise of this love-manifestation, whereof we speak, by the Spirit (the Comforter mentioned above), not to those particular persons only unto whom he was then directing his speech, or to those only of that time and age, but to them indefinitely that should love Christ and keep his commandments: which is again repeated in other words of the same import. After Judas' (not Iscariot) wondering expostulation touching that peculiarity of this loving manifestation, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."[3] So that such a manifestation as is most aptly

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 12. [2] John xiv. 16—21. [3] *Ibid.* xiv. 23.

expressive of love, such converse and cohabitation as imports most of kindness and endearedness, they have encouragement to expect that do love Christ and keep his words: the same thing, no doubt, with that "shedding abroad of the love of God in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them," mentioned before. And whereas we have so plain and repeated mention of the seal, the earnest, the firstfruits of the Spirit,—what can these expressions be understood to import (and they do not signify nothing) other than confirmation of the love of God, or assuring and satisfying evidences and pledges thereof?

And that there should be such an inward manifestation of divine love superadded to the public and external declaration of it,—which is only made indefinitely to persons so and so characterised,—the exigency of the case did require; that is, wherein it was necessary his love should be distinctly understood and apprehended, it was so far necessary this course should be taken to make it be so. A mere external revelation was not sufficient to that end; our own unassisted reasonings therefrom were not sufficient. As other truths have not their due and proper impression merely by our rational reception, be they never so plain, without that holy, sanctifying influence before insisted on; so this truth, also, of God's love to this person in particular, hath not its force and weight, its efficacy and fruit, answerable to the design of its discovery, unless it be applied and urged home on the soul by a communicated influence of the Spirit to this purpose: many times not so far as to overcome and silence tormenting doubts, fears, and anguish of spirit in reference hereto; and, where that is done, not sufficient to work off deadness, drowsiness, indisposition to the doing of God cheerful service,—not sufficient to excite and stir up love, gratitude, admiration, and praise. How many who have learned not to make light of the love of God, as the most do; who reckon, "in his favour is life;" to whom it is not an indifferent thing whether they be accepted or no; who cannot be overly in their inquiry, nor trifle with matters of everlasting consequence; who are not

enough atheists and sceptics to permit all to a mad hazard, nor easy to be satisfied,—walk mournfully from day to day, with sunk, dejected spirits, full of anxiety, even unto agonies, under the clear external discovery of God's love to persons of that character whereof they really are! Such as observe them judge their case plain, and every one thinks well of them but themselves: yea, their mouths are sometimes stopped by such as discourse the matter with them, but their hearts are not quieted;—or if they sometime are, in a degree, yet the same doubts and fears return with the former importunity,—the same work is still to be done,—and it is but rolling the returning stone; and all human endeavours to apply and bring home the comforts proper and suitable to their case, prove fruitless and ineffectual; nothing can be fastened upon them; they refuse to be comforted, while God himself doth not create (that which is the fruit of his own lips) "peace, peace,"—while as yet they are not "filled with joy and peace in believing, and made to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."[1] It is plain there needs a more learned tongue than any human one to speak "a word in season" to such weary ones.[2]

How many, again, have spirits overcome with deadness and sloth, under a settled (perhaps not altogether mistaken, but merely notional) apprehension of the same love! They have only that assurance which arises, it may be, not from a *false*, but the *single* testimony of their own spirits; at least unaccompanied with other than the ordinary help of the Spirit, not very distinguishable from the workings of their own;—have reasoned themselves (perhaps regularly, by observing the rule and the habitual bent of their own spirits) into an opinion of their own good estate, so that they are not vexed with doubts and fears, as some others are. But they do not *discover to others*, nor can *discern in themselves*, any degree of life and vigour, of heavenliness and spirituality, of love to God or zeal for him, proportionable to their high ex-

[1] Rom. xv. 13. [2] Isa. l. 4.

pectations from him, or the great import of this thing,—*to be beloved of God.* There is no discernible growth or spiritual improvement to be found with them. How remote is their temper from that of the primitive Christians! It is apparent what is yet wanting; they are not edified, as those were, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost."[1] Wherefore the matter is plain, there is such a thing as an effectual, overpowering communication of the Holy Ghost for the manifesting of the love of God,—of great necessity and importance to Christians,—that may be had, and ought to be diligently sought after.

2. And if it be afforded,—which was the other thing proposed,—how *infinitely delectable* is that manifestation! The thing itself carries its own reason and evidence with it:—

(1.) If we consider the matter represented to us thereby—*the love of a God!*—how transporting would the thought of it be to an enlightened, apprehensive mind! No one, whose nature is not overrun with barbarism, would entertain the discovery of the harmless, innocent love, though it were not profitable to us, even of a creature like ourselves, otherwise than with complacency,—yea, though it were a much inferior (even a brute) creature. Men are pleased to behold love expressing itself towards them in a child, in a poor neighbour, in an impotent servant,—yea, in their horse or their dog. The greatest prince observes with delight the affection of the meanest peasants among his subjects; much more would *they* please themselves if they have occasion to take notice of any remarkable expression of his favourable respect to them! But how unspeakably more if he vouchsafe to express it by gracious intimacies and by condescending familiarities! How doth that person hug and bless himself,—how doth his spirit triumph, and his imagination luxuriate in delightful thoughts and expectations,—who is in his own heart assured he hath the favour of his prince! Yea, with what complacency are inward friends wont to receive the mutual expressions of each

[1] Acts ix. 31.

other's love! And can it be thought the love of the great and blessed God should signify less? How great things are comprehended in this,—'The Lord of heaven and earth hath a kindness towards me, and bears me good-will!' How grateful is the relish of this apprehension, both in respect of what it in itself imports, and what it is the root and cause of!

True ingenuity values love *for itself*. 'If such a one will think of me, if I shall have a place in his remembrance, if he will count me among his friends,'—this we are apt to be pleased with. And tokens are sent and interchanged among friends, not only to express love, but to preserve and cherish it, and keep up a mutual remembrance among them. And as there is a great pleasure conceived in receiving such expressions or pledges of love from a friend, not so much for the value of the thing sent, as of what it signifies, and is the token of his love, his kind remembrance; so is there no less pleasure in giving and sending than in receiving, because that hereby, as we gratify our own love by giving it a kind of vent this way, so we foresee how we shall thereby excite theirs; which, therefore, we put a value upon, even abstracting from any advantage we expect therefrom. And this hath a manifest reason in our very natures; because we reckon there is an honour put upon us, and somewhat is attributed to us, when we are well thought of and a kindness is placed upon us, especially by such as have themselves any reputation for wisdom and judgment. How dignifying is the love of *God!* how honourable a thing to be his favourite! The Apostle seems to put a mighty stress on this, when he utters those so emphatical words, "Wherefore we labour" (so, defectively, we read it; we *covet*, or are *ambitious of it as our honour*, as that word signifies), "that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him;"[1] *q. d.* 'Neither life or death, neither being in the body or out of it, signify anything to me, or they are indifferent things in comparison of this honour, that

[1] 2 Cor. v. 9.

he may accept me, that I may be pleasing to him and gracious in his eyes; that I may stand well in his thoughts, and he bear a kind and favourable regard to me.'

Yea, and this is a thing in itself delightful, not only as it is honourable, but as it is strange and wonderful. Things that are in themselves grateful, are so much the more so for their being somewhat surprising and above all our expectation. I say, supposing they have an antecedent gratefulness in them (for otherwise we know there are also very unwelcome wonders, and which are so much the more dreadful, because they are surprising and unexpected), it is greatly heightened by their being out of the road quite of all our thoughts,—great things that we looked not for. 'And who would have looked for such a thing as this, that the Lord of glory should place his love on such a worm as I?'—which is set off with the more advantage, because the same light that represents to a soul God's love, doth also discover to it, at the same time, its own deformity and unloveliness. And then how taking and overcoming is the thought, 'I, impure wretch! loathsome miscreant! that lost apostate creature, that made one with a race and crew of rebels,—was confederate with rebellious men against him, yea, in a combination with those revolted creatures the devils,—and now taken, I know not why, into a state of acceptance and favour with him!—and his love is declared to be towards me! And why towards me, in myself so vile? And such love! the love of a holy, glorious God, towards one in whose very nature was such a horror and hell of wickedness! Why towards me, rather than others not naturally more vile than I?' How can this be thought on, without crying out, 'O wonderful! O the depths, breadths, lengths, and heights, of this love, that so infinitely passeth knowledge!' And here the greater the wonder, the greater is also the delight.

And now also are the *effects* of this love great in the eyes of the soul, according to the apprehended greatness of their cause. If we, indeed, were to form conceptions of these things ourselves, by our own light and conduct, our way

were to follow the ascending order, and go up from the effects till we reach the cause. But he can, if he please, in the cause present to us the effects, and magnify them in our eyes, by giving us to see unto how great and magnificent a cause they owe themselves. Now shall we know whence all hath proceeded that he hath done for us. Wherefore again must the transported soul admiringly cry out, 'I now see whence it was that he gave his Son,—because he so loved the world! why he came, and bled, and died, "who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood." What a lustre doth that love cast upon those sufferings and performances! I see why he sent his gospel to me; why so convincing, awakening words were often spoken in my ear; I see much in what once I saw but little; why he so earnestly strove with me by his Spirit; why he gave not over till he had overcome my heart; why he humbled, melted, broke me; why he drew so strongly, bound me so fast to himself, in safe and happy bonds; why he shone into my mind with that mild and efficacious light, transformed my whole soul, stamped it with his holy image, and marked me out for his own. These are now great things, when I behold their glorious, mighty cause!' And now also in this same cause are all the great effects to be seen which are yet to be brought about by it.

They are seen as *very great*. His continued presence and conduct, which he affords to his own through this world; that constant fellowship which they expect him to keep with them; the guidance and support they look for;—*in his love* these appear great things. And now doth heaven sound no more as an empty name; it looks not like a languid, faint shadow; somewhat can be apprehended of it that imports substance, when it is understood to be a state of rest and blessedness in the communion of the God of love, and intended as the last product and expression of his love.

They are seen as most *sure* and *certain*. Such love, now manifested and apprehended, leaves no place for doubtful thoughts and suspicious misgivings. There is no fear that

this love intends to impose upon us, or mock us with the representation of an imaginary heaven; or that it will fail to do what can be expected from it,—to bring us to the real one. How pleasant is it now to behold the great and sure products of this mighty love, its admirable designs and projects, as they appear in the gospel-revelation, now illustrated and shone upon by divine light, to lie ready formed in the pregnant womb of this great productive cause! It cannot but be an unspeakable pleasure which such a discovery will carry with it, when we thus behold the matter itself that is discovered and offered to our view; unto which it must be a very considerable additional pleasure that will arise,—

(2.) From *the nature and kind* of this manifestation; as being—

In the general *made by himself.* It is a too plain and sad truth, that men have unhappily learned to diminish God to themselves, and make everything of him seem little. But when he represents his love *himself* (as who but God can represent the love of God?—he only can tell the story of his own love), that evil is provided against. He will manifest it so as it shall be understood; and set it off to the best advantage. He will make it known how great a thing it is to be beloved of him. And when he gives that blessed salutation, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured! O thou that art greatly beloved!" he will withal bespeak and procure a suitable entertainment of it. And hence, particularly, it will be—

Most incomparably *bright and lightsome,* in respect of any representation we have had of the love of God any other way.

Most *immediate:* that is, at least, so as not to be only made by some external testimony, given out many an age ago, out of which we are left to pick what we can, and to construe or misconstrue it, as our own judgment serves us; but so as that if he use such an instrument, he animates it, puts a soul into it, leaves it not as a dead, spiritless letter; and applies it himself to the purpose he intends by it, and immediately himself reaches and touches the heart by it.

Most *facile* and easily sliding in upon us: so that we are put to no more pains than to behold the light which the sun casts about us and upon us. Whatever labour it was necessary for us to use before, in our searches and inquiries into the state of our case, there is no more now than in moving, being carried; or in using our own weak hand when another, that is sufficiently strong, lifts and guides it for us.

Most *efficacious* and overcoming: that makes its own way, scatters clouds, drives away darkness, admits no disputes, makes doubts and misgiving thoughts vanish, pierces with a quick and sudden energy like lightning, and strikes through the mind into the heart; there sheds abroad this love, diffuses the sweet refreshing savour of it; actuates spiritual sense, makes the soul taste how gracious the Lord is, and relish the sweetness of his love; puts all its powers into a suitable motion, and excites answerable affection, so as to make the soul capable of interchanging love with love.

In all these respects, this manifestation of love cannot but be very delectable; and they who have not found it to be so, will yet apprehend that it must be so, if they have found and experienced the cravings of their own hearts directed this way, and can upon inquiry find this among the things they would fain have from God: 'O that I might be satisfied of his love! that I might know his good-will towards me!' for to such cravings must this delight at least be commensurate, as was formerly said. But to them that are indifferent in this matter and unconcerned, to whom the love of God is a fancy or a trifle, no real, or an inconsiderable thing, all this will be as tasteless as the white of an egg.

Concerning which yet (before we pass from this head) it is needful to add these few things, by way of *caution*:—

i. That when we say this is of great necessity, we mean not that it is *simply necessary*. We think it not so necessary that a Christian cannot be without it,—that is, as a Christian; but it is necessary to his well and more comfortable being, and his more lively, fruitful walking and acting in his Christian course.

ii. That therefore the way of God's dealing herein is with great latitude and variety; he having reserved to himself, by the tenor of his covenant, a liberty to afford or suspend it, to give it in a greater or less degree, as in absolute sovereignty and infinite wisdom he pleases and sees fit to determine.

iii. It may not therefore with so absolute and peremptory an expectation be sought after, as those things may that are necessary to the holding of souls in life; but with much resignation, submission, and deference of the matter to the divine good pleasure,—such as shall neither import disesteem of it, nor impatience in the want of it.

iv. That it ought to be less esteemed than the *heart-rectifying* communication, that is impressive of God's image, and whereby we are made partakers of his holiness. *This* proceeds more entirely from pure love to God for himself; *that* from self-love.—This tends more directly to the pleasing of us than to the pleasing of God. This is necessary, as was said, but to our well or better being; that simply to our very being in Christ. This hath its greatest real value from its subserviency to the other; and what hath its value from its reference to another must be of less value than that.

v. That it is a great mistake to think God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than in this way of more express testification of his love; as if you could have no enjoyment of a friend, otherwise than by his often repeating to you, 'I love you, I love you, indeed I love you!'

vi. That it is a much greater mistake to place the sum of religion here; and that any should make it the whole of their business to seek this, or to talk of it; or should think God doth nothing for them worth their acknowledgment and solemn thanksgiving while he doth not this.

vii. Most of all, that any should reckon it the first thing they have to do when they begin to mind religion, to believe God's particular love to them, and that he hath elected them, pardoned them, and will certainly save them. So too many most dangerously impose upon themselves; and accordingly

before any true humiliation, renovation of heart, or transaction and stipulation with the Redeemer, do set themselves thus to believe, and, it may be, seek help from God more strongly to believe it; whenas the devil is too ready to help them to this faith. And when he hath done it, they cry to themselves, "Peace, peace!" and think all is well; take their liberty, and humour themselves; live as they list, and say that for so long a time they have had assurance of their salvation. The father of lies must needs be the author, or the fautor, or both of this faith; for it is a lie which they believe; that is, that they are pardoned and accepted of God is a downright lie, repugnant to his word and the tenor of his covenant; and, for anything else that may import their state to be at present safe, is to them no credible truth.

viii. That for the most part, if Christians, upon whom the renewing work of the Holy Ghost in that former communication hath in some degree taken place, do yet want that degree of *this* also which is necessary to free them from very afflicting doubts and fears, and enable them to a cheerful and lively walking with God, it is to be reckoned their own fault: either that they put too much upon it, too little minding his public declarations in his word, or do unduly seek it or unseasonably expect it; or that they put too little upon it, and expect or seek it not; or that, by their indulged carnality, earthliness, vanity of spirit, they render themselves incapable of it; or by their careless and too licentious walking, or their either resisting or neglecting holy motions, they grieve that Spirit that would comfort them. For though the restraint of such more pleasant communications may proceed sometimes from an unaccountable sovereignty, that owes no reason to us of its arbitrary way of giving or withholding favours, yet withal we are to know and consider that there is such a thing as paternal and domestic justice proper to God's own family, and which, as the head and father of it, he exerciseth therein; whereby, though he do not exercise it alike at all times, it seems meet to his infinite wisdom to awaken and arouse the sloth, or rebuke the folly, or check the vanity, or

chastise the wantonness, of his offending children; and that even in this way,—by retiring himself, becoming more reserved, withdrawing the more discernible tokens of his presence, and leaving them to the torture sometimes of their own conjectures, what worse thing may ensue. And herein he may design, not only *reformation* to the delinquents, but *instruction* to others and even *vindication* to himself. For however these his dealings with men's spirits are in themselves—as they must needs be—secret, and such as come not under the immediate notice of other men, yet somewhat consequential thereto doth more openly appear, and becomes obvious to the common observation of serious Christians with whom such persons converse;—that is, not only such as languish under the more remarkable terrors of their spirits, and are visibly, as it were, consuming in their own flame,—of which sort there occur very monitory and instructive examples at some times,—but even such also as are deprived of his quickening influence, and have only somewhat remaining in them that is ready to die, that are pining away in their iniquities, and sunk deep into deadness and carnality (for his comforting communication is also quickening, and he doth not use to withhold it as it is quickening, and continue it as it is comforting, but if such have comfort, such as it is, they are their own comforters), do carry very discernible tokens of divine displeasure upon them; and the evils and distempers under which their spirits lie wasting are both their sin and punishment. Their "own wickedness corrects them, and their backsliding reproves them." And that reproof, being observable, doth at the same time warn others, yea, and doth that right to God as to let it be seen he makes a difference, and refuses the intimacies with more negligent, loose, idle, wanton professors of his name, which he vouchsafes to have with some others that make it more their business and study to carry acceptably towards him, and are more manifestly serious, humble, diligent, obedient observers of his will. If, therefore, we find not what we have found in this kind, however the matter may possibly be resolvable into the divine plea-

sure—as it is more likely to be in the case of such desertions as are accompanied with terror, when no notorious apostasy or scandalous wickedness hath gone before,—it is both safe and modest, yea, and obvious, to suspect such delinquencies, as were before mentioned, are designed to be animadverted upon; and that the love hath been injured which is now not manifested as heretofore.

ix. That yet, such a degree of it as is necessary to a comfortable serving of God in our stations being afforded, such superadded degrees as whereby the soul is in frequent raptures and transports are not to be thought withheld penally, in any peculiar or remarkable respect, or otherwise than it may be understood some way a penalty not to be already perfectly blessed; for it is certain that such rapturous sensations, and the want of them, are not the distinguishing characters of the more grown, strong, and excellent Christians, and of them that are more infirm, and of a meaner and lower pitch and stature. Yea, those ecstatical emotions, although they have much of a sensible delectation in them—as more hereafter may be said to that purpose,—and though they may, in part, proceed from the best and most excellent cause, do yet, if they be frequent (which would signify an aptitude thereto), import somewhat of diminution in their subject, and imply what is some way a lessening of it; that is, they imply the persons that are more disposed this way to be of a temper not so well fixed and composed, but more volatile and airy: which yet doth not intimate that the chief cause and author of those motions is therefore mean and ignoble,—nay, it argues nothing to the contrary but that the Holy Spirit itself may be the supreme cause of them; for, admitting it to be so, it doth not alter men's natural tempers and complexions, but so acts them as that they retain, and express upon occasion, what was peculiar to their temper notwithstanding. The work and office of the Holy Ghost, in its special communications, is to alter and new mould men in respect of their moral dispositions, not those which are strictly and purely natural; the subject is in this regard the same as it was, and

whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of that, and it gives a tincture to what supervenes and is implanted thereinto: whence the same degree of such communicated influence will not so discernibly move some tempers as it doth others,—as the same quantity of fire will not so soon put solid wood into a flame, as it will light straw. That some men, therefore, are less sensibly and passionately moved with the great things of God, and even with the discovery of his love, than some others, doth not argue them to have less of the Spirit, but more of that temper which better comports with deeper judgment, and a calm and sober consideration of things. The unaptness of some men's affections unto strong and fervent motion, doth indeed arise from a stupid inconsiderateness; of some others, from a more profound consideration, by which the deeper things sink, and the more they pierce even into the inmost centre of the soul, the less they move the surface of it. And though I do not think the saying of that heathen applicable to this case, "It is a wise man's part to admire nothing,"—for here is matter enough in this theme, the love of God, to justify the highest wonderment possible, and not to admire in such a case is most stupidly irrational,—yet I conceive the admiration, as well as other affections, of more considering persons is more inward, calm, sedate, and dispassionate; and is not the less for being so, but is the more solid and rational; and the pleasure that attends it is the more deep and lasting: and the fervour that ensues upon the apprehended love of God, prompting them to such service as is suitable to a state of devotedness to his interest, is more intense and durable;—of the others, more flashy and inconstant; as, though flax set on fire will flame more than iron, yet withal it will smoke more, and will not glow so much, nor keep heat so long.

x. But to shut up this discourse: They that have more transporting apprehensions of the love of God, should take heed of despising them who have them not in just the same kind, or do not express them in the same seraphic strains. They that have them not, should take heed of censuring

those that, with humble modesty, upon just occasion, discover and own what they do experience in this kind; much less should they conclude, that because they find them not, there is therefore no such thing to be found: which cynical humour is too habitual to such tempers. If they do fancy such to be a weaker sort of persons, they may be sincere for all that. And it ought to be considered of whom it was said, that He would not "quench the smoking flax." The grace and Spirit of Christ ought to be reverenced in the various appearances thereof: "Whether we be sober or beside ourselves, the love of Christ constraineth us,"[1]—so diversely may the apprehensions of that love work in the same person, much more in diverse. Christians should be shy of making themselves standards to one another; which they that do, discover more pride and self-conceit than acquaintance with God, and more admiration of themselves than of his love.

Thus far we have given some account of the object to be delighted in; wherein, if any think strange that we have spoken so much of the delectable, divine communication as belonging to the object—which how it doth hath been sufficiently shown,—let them call it, if they please, a preparing or disposing of the subject (which it also, making its own way into the soul, as hath been said, effectually doth); and if the necessity of it be acknowledged upon that account, it equally answers the main purpose aimed at in all this; and had it been only so considered, would but have inferred some alteration in the frame and method of this discourse, but not at all of the substance or design of it.

II. We are next to say somewhat briefly of the *delight itself* to be taken therein. Nor shall we be herein so curious as to distinguish, which some do, *delight* and *joy*. The distinction wont to be assigned cannot, it is plain, hold here, so as to make the former of these signify a brutish affection only, and the latter proper to rational nature. Nor is there

[1] 2 Cor. v. 13, 14.

any such propriety belonging to the words but they may be rendered—as indeed they are used in Scripture promiscuously—either in reference to the matter of intellectual or sensitive complacency, and either of a reasonable being or an unreasonable. We take these, therefore, to signify substantially the same thing, and here delight to be entirely all one with joy;—that is, there is not any the highest degree of joy which may not be fitly enough comprehended under the name of delight, when it is placed—as here it is required to be—upon the blessed God; whereof, that we may speak the more fully, it will be necessary to preface somewhat concerning its general nature, and more principally as it is found in man, within which compass our principal business lies.

Delight, in the *general*, is most intimately essential to love; which imports a well-pleasedness arising from the apprehended goodness or congruity of the thing loved: and it seems to be merely by accident that there is anything else in love besides that complacency of delight;—that is, what there is else belonging to the nature of love arises from the mixture and variety which is to be found in the present state of things; which if it were at present universally and perfectly good, and as most rationally it might be wished, love could have no exercise but in delight. Not being so, desire that it might be so, in reference to ourselves and others whom we love, comes duly to have place; together with other acts or exercises of love, which it belongs not so much to our present purpose to mention.

For instance, whatsoever we can love is either things or persons. Whatsoever things we love is for the sake of persons, either ourselves or others; whom also we love either supremely or subordinately. And whomsoever we love supremely, as it is certainly either God or ourselves, we love whatsoever else, person or thing, either for God's sake or our own. Be it now the one or other, or wheresoever we can place our love, we find things, in reference to any object of it, not yet as we would have them, and as they shall be in that settled state which shall be

permanent and last always; whereunto this is but preparatory only, and introductive. The creation is indigent; every creature wants somewhat even whereof it is capable; and our own wants, in many respects, we cannot but feel. Nothing is perfect in its own kind, in respect of all possible accessories thereto. Even the state of glorified spirits above is not yet every way perfect,—much is wanting to their full and complete felicity; the body and community whereto they belong, "the general assembly," is not yet entire and full; their common Ruler and Lord is not acknowledged and had in honour as he shall be; in the meanwhile, their consummate blessedness, which much depends on these things, and the solemn jubilee to be held at the close and finishing of all God's work, is deferred: yea, and if we go higher, the blessed God himself, the author and original of all things, although nothing be wanting to the real perfection of his being and blessedness, hath yet much of his right withheld from him by his lapsed and apostate creatures:—so that, which way soever we turn ourselves, there remains to us much matter of rational, yea, and holy desire, and most just cause that our love, place we it as well and duly as we can, have its exercise that way; we have before us many desiderata, according as things yet are. *Desire* is, therefore, *love suited to an imperfect state of things*, wherein it is yet imperfect. And because it is suited to such a state of things, it cannot therefore but be imperfect love, or love *tending* to perfection. Pure and simple delight, is love suited to a state of things every way perfect, and whereto there is nothing lacking. Wherefore delight appears to be *the perfection of love*, or *desire satisfied*.

But now because this present state is mixed, and not simply evil, or such wherein we find no present good, therefore the love which is suited thereto ought consequently to be mixed of these two especially (unto which two the present discourse is both extended and confined, because these two affections only are mentioned in the text), *desire* and *delight*. So far as things are otherwise than we practically apprehend it is fit they should be, with ourselves or others whom we love, our

love is exercised in *desire;*—wherein they are as we would have them, in *delight:* for then our desire is so far satisfied, and desire satisfied ceases, though love do not cease; or, it ceases not by vanishing into nothing, but by being satisfied, —that is, by being perfected in the delight which now takes place.

The one of these is therefore truly said to be love exercised upon a good which we behold at a distance, and are reaching at; the other, love solacing itself in a present good. They are as the wings and arms of love: those for pursuits, these for embraces. Or, the former is love in motion, the latter is love in rest; and, as in bodily motion and rest, *that* is in order to *this*, and is perfected in it. Things move, not that they may move, but that they may rest;—whence perpetual progressive motion is not to be found; so it is also in the motion and rest of the mind or spirit. It moves towards an object with a design and expectation to rest in it, and, according to the course and order which God hath stated and set, can never move forward endlessly towards a good in which it shall not at length rest; though yet desire and delight have a continual vicissitude, and do, as it were circularly, beget one another. And thus hath God himself been pleased to express his own delight, or the joy which he takes in his people, even by the name of rest, namely, that of love: "He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love."[1] Wherefore delight hath not been unfitly defined—the repose or rest of the desiring faculty in the thing desired.

It is true that love, as such, hath ever somewhat of delectation in it; for we entertain the first view of any thing we apprehend as good, with some pleasedness therein, so far as it is loved,—it is grateful to us, and we are gratified some way by it: yea, there is somewhat of this before any emotion by desire towards it, for we would not desire it if it were not pleasing to us; which desire is then continued, as far as love

[1] Zeph. iii. 17.

is in exercise, till it be attained for ourselves or others, according as the object of our love,—that is, the object *for whom*, as we may call it,—is.

Nor is that a difficulty, how yet there may be somewhat of delectation, and even of rest, in this love of desire. For the soul doth in that case, while it is thus desiring, rest from the indetermination of desire;—that is, if it have placed love upon any one, itself or another, upon whom, therefore, it doth with a sort of pleasedness stay and rest, it doth first, in the general, desire it may be well with such a one; and then, if any thing occur to its notice that it apprehends would be an advantage to the person loved, though it cease not desiring it, yet it ceases from those its former hoverings of desire, being pitched upon this one thing, as satisfied that this would be a good to him it loves. The appetite stays and insists upon this thing; as the Psalmist, "One thing have I desired."[1] It hath here, as it were, a sort of hypothetical rest; *q. d.* 'How well pleased should I be if this were compassed and brought about!' Or it hath an anticipated and preapprehended rest,—a rest in hope, by which the object is some way made present, as it is said, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." For there is no rational desire which is not accompanied with hope. Despair stifles desire. That which appears simply impossible passes for nothing; and goodness goes not beyond the compass of being. But whatsoever appears to us a good, whether for ourselves or another, that is suitable and possible;—*that*, if love stir in reference to it, becomes the object of complacential desire: that is, it pleases us first upon sight, or upon such an apprehension of it; the appetite pitches, centres, and rests upon it; and then we pursue it with desire. But then our delectation therein grows, as our hope doth it will be attained; and still more,—if we find it to answer its first appearance,—as, by degrees, it is attained actually; till being fully attained, our desire, as to that thing, ends in all the delight and satisfaction which it

[1] Ps. xxvii. 4.

can afford us. So that the delight and rest which follows desire, in the actual fruition of a full and satisfying good, is much more intense and pure than that which either goes before or doth accompany it, and is indeed the same thing with fruition or enjoyment itself; only that this term hath been by some more appropriated to signify the delectation which is taken in the last end, unto which yet it hath no more native designation than divers other words. We have, then, thus far some general notion of delight, and also of desire, which is taken in here only on the bye, and as tending somewhat to illustrate the other, whereof yet what we now say may be of some use hereafter.

We are next to speak of this *delight* in *special*, which is here to be placed upon God. About which we are to consider, both *what it is we are called to*, and *how we are to reckon ourselves called to it*. And,—

First, That we may show *what we are called to*. Having in this general account spoken only of human delight, or of delight as it is to be found among men, it will now be necessary to distinguish this into *merely natural* and *holy*. And when we thus distinguish, it is to be understood that by *natural* we mean what is within the sphere of nature in its present corrupted state; otherwise, what was natural to man did, taken in a larger sense, include holiness in it: and so the addition of holiness doth but make up purely natural delight, as it was at first; but as the case now is, the distinction is necessary. And the *latter* of these only will be the subject of our following discourse, as being only suitable to the blessed object whereon it must terminate, and only capable of being applied thereto.

When, therefore, our delight is to be placed and set on God, this must be understood as presupposed, that it be purified, drained from the pollution and impure tinctures which it hath derived from our vitiated natures, and further contracted by our converse with impure, mean, and vile things. For only that delight is to be placed on God which can be so placed. And delighting in God being duly

designed, that is by consequence designed which is necessary thereto; and thereto is necessary not merely the direction of one such particular act towards God, but a holy principle, as prerequisite to the right doing even of that also. Unholy love declines God; and, indeed, it is unholy inasmuch as it doth so. Whence, therefore, it is as impossible it should be set on God, remaining unholy, as that it should be another thing from itself, and yet be still wholly what it was. Although it cannot be another thing in its general nature, as it is not necessary it should, it must be a much altered thing, by the accession of holiness thereto. And this coming upon the whole soul, even upon all its faculties and powers, doth therein spread itself unto its delight also. Delight in God is not the work of an unholy heart. And, as may be collected from what hath been said, holiness consisting in a right disposition of heart towards God, a divine nature participated from him, conformed to him, and which works and tends towards him, and in itself so delightful a thing, it may thence be seen what holy delight is, or wherein the holiness of it stands.

It must to this purpose be considered that this holy delight is twofold, according to a twofold consideration of the delectable object; into which what was formerly said about it may be reduced. All delight in God supposes, as hath been said, some communication from him.

That communication is either of light, whereby his nature and attributes are in some measure known; or of operating influence, whereby his image is impressed, and the soul is framed according to his will. And so it is partly mental or notional (I mean, not merely notional, but that hath with it also an aptitude to beget a correspondent impression on the soul, and not engage it in some speculations concerning him only), and partly real, that actually begets such an impression itself. It is partly such as may be understood, and partly such as may be felt: the manifestation of his love partly belongs to the one of these, and partly to the other.

Answerably hereto, the delight that is taken in him is either more open and explicit, and wherein a person reflects

upon and takes notice of his own act, and whereupon it is exercised; or, more latent, implicit, and unobserved, when his delight lies folded up in other acts and dispositions, which have another more principal design, though that also is involved in them. The *former* way the soul delights in God more directly, applying itself thereto on purpose, and bending the mind and heart intentionally thereto; its present views of him having that very design and aim: the *latter* way, it delights in him rather collaterally, when its present action, as well as the disposition leading to it, hath another more direct scope and aim. And the delight only adheres to the act, as being in itself delightful;—as, for instance, the acts of repentance, trust, self-denial, etc., which have another end than delight, though that insinuates into them.

The former of these may be called *contemplative* delight,—the soul solacing itself in a pleasant meditation of God, whereby its delight in him is excited and stirred up. The latter,—understanding sense spiritually, as it belongs to the new creature, and is taken,[1]—may be called *sensitive* delight, whereby the soul, as it were, tastes how gracious the Lord is; which though it doth by the other also, yet the distinction holds in respect of the way wherein the delight is begotten and begun, if not in respect of the thing itself begotten, or wherein the matter ends. In the former way, the soul more expressly reflects upon its own present exercise, which it directly intends. In the latter, it may not reflect expressly either upon its actual delight which it hath, nor actually consider God as the object that yields it that pleasure; as I may be delighted by the pleasant taste of this or that food, without considering what the thing is I am feeding on, nor have distinct reflection on the pleasure I take therein, having another and more principal design in eating,—the recruiting of my strength,—and that delight being only accessory and accruing on the bye. The former is less durable, and sooner apt to vanish upon the cessation of the present act, like the

[1] Phil. i. 9; Heb. v. 14.

delight of the eye. The latter is more permanent, as that of the taste, and habitual; such as is the pleasure of any thing whereof one hath a continued possession,—as of a confirmed state and habit of health, or of the riches, dignities, pleasant accommodations, which belong to any one's settled condition; of which he hath that continual enjoyment that insensibly forms his spirit, raises and keeps it up to a pitch suitable to his condition, though he have not every day or hour distinct formed thoughts of them, nor is often in that contemplative transport with Nebuchadnezzar,—"Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" etc.

Both these are holy delight, or delight in God; in both whereof may be seen, added to the general nature of delight, a holy nature as the principle, inferring a powerful, steady determination of the heart towards God, as the object and end which it ultimately tends to and terminates upon;—though in the former way of delighting in God, the soul tends towards him more directly; in the latter, according as the acts may be to which the delight adheres, more obliquely, and through several things that may be intermediate unto that final and ultimate object.

And both these may fitly be understood to be within the meaning of this text; which, therefore, we shall now consider apart and severally, though both of them very briefly.

And we begin with the *latter* of them. For though the former have, in some respect, an excellency in it above the latter, yet, as the progress of nature in other creatures is by way of ascent from what is more imperfect to what is perfecter and more excellent, so is it with the communicated Divine nature in the new creature, which puts itself forth, first in more imperfect operations, the buddings, as it were, of that tree of life which hath its more florid blossoms, and at length its ripe and fragrant fruit afterwards; or, to come nearer the case, inasmuch as the latter sort of delight, according to the order wherein we before mentioned them, hath more in it of the exercise of spiritual sense, the other more of spiritual reason,—since human creatures, that have natures

capable of both sorts of functions, do first exercise sense, and by a slower and more gradual process, come on to acts of ratiocination afterwards,—so it is here: the soul in which the Divine life hath taken place doth first exercise itself in spiritual sensations; so that though, in the matter of delight, it is not destitute of the grateful relishes of things truly and spiritually delectable, yet the more formed and designed acts of holy delectation, in the highest object thereof, distinctly apprehended and pitched upon for that purpose, do follow in their season; and these are preparations, and the essays of the new creature, gradually and more indistinctly putting forth itself in order thereto,—the embryos of the other.

If, therefore, it be inquired wherein the delight of this more imperfect sort doth consist? I answer, in the soul's sensation and relish of sweetness in the holy, quickening communications of God unto it, by which he first forms it for himself; and in the operations which it is hereby enabled to put forth towards him, while it is in the infancy or childhood of its Christian state. Nor, while we say the delight of this kind doth more properly belong to the younger and more immature state of Christianity, do we thereby intend wholly to appropriate or confine it to that state. For as when a child is grown up to the capacity of exercising reason, it doth not then give over to use sense, but continues the exercise of it also in its adult state, even as long as the person lives; only, in its infancy and childhood its life is more entirely a life of sense, though there are early buddings of reason, that soon come to be intermingled therein; notwithstanding which, the principle that rules and is more in exercise, more fitly gives the denomination;—so it is in this case also; that is, though there are sensations of delight and pleasure in religion,—yea, and those more quick, confirmed, and strong in more grown Christians,—yet these sensations are more single and unaccompanied, though not altogether, with the exercise of spiritual reason and judgment, and do less come in that way with Christians in their minority, than with others or themselves afterwards.

Therefore, that which we are to understand ourselves called to under the name of delighting in God, thus taken, is, —the keeping of our souls open to Divine influences and communications; thirsting after them, praying and waiting for them; endeavouring to improve them and co-operate with them, and to stir up ourselves unto such exercises of religion as they lead to, and are most suitable to our present state; together with an allowing, yea, and applying ourselves to stay and taste, in our progress and course, the sweetness and delightfulness of those communications and operations whereof we have any present experience.

For instance, when we find God at work with us, and graciously dealing with our spirits, to humble them, break and melt them under a sense of sin, incline and turn them towards himself, draw them to a closure with his Son the Redeemer, to a resignation and surrender of ourselves to him, upon the terms of his covenant and law of grace: yea, and when afterwards we find him framing our hearts to a course of holy walking and conversation; to the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts; to a sober, righteous, and godly life in this present world; to the exercises of piety, sobriety, righteousness, charity, mercy, etc.; and now this or the like heavenly dictate occurs to us, "Delight thyself in the LORD," —what doth it import? what must we understand it to say or signify to us? Though this that hath been mentioned, and which we are now saying, is not all that it signifies— as will be shown hereafter — yet thus much we must understand it doth signify and say to us, 'Thy only true delights are to be found in a course of religion: they are not to be expected from this world, or thy former sinful course, but in exercising thyself unto godliness, in receiving and complying with the Divine discoveries, recommended to thee in the gospel, and, through them, the influences of life and grace which readily flow in upon any soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and by which thou mayst be framed in all things after the good, and holy, and acceptable will of God. Herein thou

shalt find such pleasures and delights entertaining thy soul, as that thou wilt have no cause to envy wicked men their sensual delights, which they find in their sinful way;—if thou wilt but observe what thou findest, and exercise thy sense to discern between good and evil, and set thyself to consider whether there be not as well more satisfying as purer relishes of pleasure, in mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, in denying thyself, in dying to this world, in living to God, in minding the things of another world; in giving up thyself to the several exercises of a holy life,—watching, praying, meditating, etc.; in trusting in the Lord with all thy heart, and in doing all the good thou canst in thy place and station, "letting thy light so shine before men, that they, seeing thy good works, may glorify thy Father which is in heaven;" in contentment with what thou enjoyest, and patience under what thou sufferest, in this world; in doing justice, loving righteousness, and walking humbly with thy God;—than ever the vanishing pleasures of sin did or can afford.'

Thus into these two things may all be summed up which delighting in God imports, according to this notion of it: The applying ourselves to those things, by the help of God's own communicated influence,—which in that case will not be withheld,—wherein the matter of delight lies; and the reflecting upon the things themselves that are so delightful, and setting ourselves to discern, and tasting actually the delectableness of them. And surely, if such words, "Delight thyself in the LORD," do say to us all this, they do not say nothing; nor say anything impertinent, either to their own native import, or our state and condition in this world.

But here it may be objected: 'If we so interpret delighting in God, we shall by this means bring the whole of religion, and all sorts of actions that are governed and directed by it, within the compass of this one thing; and make delighting in God swallow up all that belongs to a Christian, and be the same thing with repentance, faith, self-denial, humility, meekness, patience, etc.;— which would, sure, seem too much

to be comprehended under the name of one particular holy action or affection, especially that they should be called delighting in God, when, in the exercise of divers of these, God may possibly not be in that instant actually so much as thought on.' To this it may be sufficiently answered:—

First, That these things cannot be hence said, with any pretence, to be made the same thing with delighting in God, but only that there is a delight adhering to all these; no more than it can be said, when, at some splendid treat or entertainment, there is a great variety of delicious meats and wine, which do therefore all agree in this, that they are delectable, that all these dishes and liquors are therefore one and the same. Or, if the master of the feast call upon his guests to delight themselves with him, their friend,—as here the particle in the text, which we read "delight thyself *in* the LORD," may be read "delight thyself *with* him,"—and he explains himself, that he means by tasting this and that and another sort of his provisions, and eating and drinking cheerfully thereof; surely his words could not with more reason than civility be capable of that snarling reply, That, therefore, it seems, he thought the things themselves or their tastes and relishes were all one; for though they all afford delight, yet each of a different kind.

Secondly, But are not all these truly delectable? Is there not a real delight to be had in them? Let any man that hath tried, consult his experience; yea, let any one that hath not besotted his soul and infatuated his understanding, but seriously consider the very ideas of these things, and revolve the notions of them in his mind, and then soberly judge whether they be not delightful. And if so, when there is an actual sense of pleasure and sweetness in the communicated power, and in the practice of them, why is not this delighting in God? Admit that he is not actually thought on in some of these exercises,—as when I freely forgive a wrong, or relieve a distressed person, or right a wronged one,—if yet I do these things from the radical principle of the love of God deeply settled in my soul, and with a sensible delight

accompanying my act, and the disposition I find in my heart thereunto; here is not, it is true, the very act of delighting in God formally terminated upon him as the object, but it is he that gives me this delight, and is the material object, as well as author, of it. The communication is from him whereby I am delighted, and enabled to do the things that are further delightful;—as, if I converse with an excellent person, my intimate friend, who is at this time *incognito*, and by a disguise conceals himself from me, or I, through my forgetfulness or inadvertency, have no present thoughts of this person, but I hear his pleasant discourse, and am much taken with it, and the person on the account of it,—it is my friend that I delighted in all this while, though I knew it not.

Thirdly, And what fault can I find in the matter, that Divine delight thus runs and spreads itself through the whole business of religion, and all the affairs whereon it hath any influence? Is this the worse, or the better? Have I any cause to quarrel at this? Sure I have not. But if I have not such actual thoughts of God as may give me the advantage of terminating my delight more directly on him, that may be very much my own fault.

Fourthly, And what! is that an absurdity, that, under the name of delighting in God, the several acts and exercises of religion besides should be comprehended? How often in Scripture are other, no more eminent, parts of religion put for the whole! 'The knowledge of God,' 'calling upon God,' 'the fear of God,' etc.,—how commonly are these things acknowledged to be paraphrases of religion! And shall I not add, the *love* of God,—that most authentic and owned summary of all practical religion, and which ought to influence all our actions? And then how far are we from our mark? What is the difference between loving God and delighting in him? But I moreover add, that delight itself in him cannot but be so taken in that sharp passage (though misapplied to the person of whom it was meant), "For Job hath said, What profit is it that a man should delight himself

with God?"[1] that is, 'or be religious?' It fitly enough signifies religion, as thus modified or qualified,—namely, as having this quality belonging to it, that it is delightful, or is tinctured with delight in God.

But this, so large, is not the only sense, as we have said, wherein we are to take "delighting in God." And when any part of religion casts its name upon the whole, it would be very unreasonable to exclude the part from which the denomination is taken, or not to make that the principal thing there meant. We therefore proceed to speak,—

Of the more explicit delight in God: and shall therein consider *the nature* and *modification of it.*

1. Its *nature;* which, from what hath been said of delight in the general, with the addition of holiness thereto (which is the work of God's Spirit, determining the act or faculty to which it adheres towards God), may be conceived thus,—That it is the acquiescence or rest of the soul in God, by a satisfiedness of will in him, as the best and most excellent good. That it be *the rest of the soul*, belongs to its general nature. And so doth the mentioned kind of rest, more distinguishingly, by the will's satisfiedness in him; because the soul may be also said to rest satisfied, in respect of another faculty, by the mere knowledge of truth; but this supposes so much of that also as is necessary. And because the acts of the understanding are subservient and in order to those of the will, in the soul's pursuit of a delightful good, which is so far attained as it actually delights therein, therefore this may more simply be called the rest of the whole soul, whereas that other is its rest but in some respect only; especially when we add, as in the best and most excellent good: for this signifies the good wherein it rests to be ultimate, and its last end, the very period of its pursuits, beyond which it neither needs nor desires to go farther,—namely, as to the kind and nature of the good which it is now intent upon; though it still desire more of the same, till there be no place

[1] Job xxxiv. 9.

left for further desire, but it wholly cease and end in full satisfaction. And that we may speak somewhat more particularly of this rest in God: it supposes,—

(1.) *Knowledge* of him; that the soul be well furnished with such conceptions of his nature and attributes, as that it may be truly said to be himself it delights in, and not another thing;—not an idol of its own fancy, and which its imagination hath created and set up to it instead of God. Therefore his own representation of himself must be our measure; which being forsaken, or not so diligently attended to, he is either by some misrepresented, according as their own corrupt hearts do suggest impure thoughts, and made altogether such a one as themselves, and such as cannot be the object of a pure and spiritual delight; or by others, as their guilt and fear do suggest to them black and direful thoughts of him, rendered such as that he cannot be the object of any delight at all.

(2.) It supposes *actual thoughts* of him: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, ... when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches."[1]

(3.) A *pleasedness* with even the first view or apprehension of him; which is most essential to any love to him, and which gives rise to any motion of,—

(4.) *Desire* directed towards him, upon the apprehension that somewhat is absent, either of what is due to him, or lacking to ourselves from him.

(5.) It includes the *satisfaction* or *repose* itself which the soul hath, so far as it finds its desire answered in the one kind or the other: where we must more distinctly know that the delight taken in him is according as the desire is which works towards him; and *that* as our *love* to him is. Now we love him either for himself, or for our ownselves:—

For *himself*, ultimately, so as that our love periods in him, and stays there,—namely, on him as good in himself.

[1] Ps. lxiii. 5, 6.

For *ourselves;* as when our love to him returns upon ourselves, apprehending a goodness in him which is suitable for our enjoyment. Loving him in the *former way* we desire all may be ascribed and given to him that possibly may or can. And because we know him to be every way perfect and full, and that nothing can be added to him of real perfection, and therefore nothing can be given him besides external honour and acknowledgments, we therefore desire these may be universally rendered him to the very uttermost. And as far as we find him worthily glorified, admired, and had in honour, so far we have delight in, or in reference to, him; consisting in the gratification of that desire. Loving him in the *other way,*—which also we are not only allowed, but obliged to do, in contradistinction to all creature good,—we desire his nearer presence and converse, more full communications of his light, grace, and consolations; and are delighted according as we find such desire is answered unto us.

(6.) The form of expression used in the text implies also a *stirring up ourselves,* and the use of endeavours with our own hearts, to foment, heighten, and raise our own delight: the conjugation—as it is thought fit to be called—into which the word is put, importing, by a peculiarity of expressiveness belonging to the sacred language, action upon one's self; which must also be understood to have the same force in reference to that former sense of delighting in God—that is, that we put ourselves upon these acts and exercises whereunto such delight is adjoined. These things are now more cursorily mentioned, because there will be occasion more at large to insist on them in the discourse of the practice of this duty, reserved to the Second Part.

2. We now proceed to the *modification* of this delight in God, or the right manner or measure of it: concerning which it is apparent in the general it can be no further right than as it is agreeable to its object. That our delight should ever be adequate, or of a measure equal to it, is plainly impossible; but it must be some way suitable, or must bear proportion to it. I shall here mention but two—and those

very eminent—respects wherein it must do so; namely, in respect of the excellency and the permanency of the good to be delighted in:—

(1.) The *excellency* of it. Inasmuch as it is the best and highest good, it plainly challenges our *highest delight:* that is, the highest delight *simply,* which our natures are capable of, is most apparently due to the blessed God, even by the law of nature itself, resulting from our natures, referred unto his: and, as the case stands under the gospel, the highest delight *comparatively;* that is, higher than we take in anything else;—nothing must be so much delighted in as he. We do not otherwise delight in him as God; which is one way of glorifying him. And it is part of the apostle's charge upon the pagan world, that "knowing him to be God, they did not glorify him *as God.*"

If we make the comparison between him and all the good things of this world, the matter is out of question. It is the sense of holy souls, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and whom can I desire on earth besides thee?"[1] When others say, "Who will show us any good?" they say, "LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance;" and thereby he "puts gladness into their hearts, more than when corn and wine increase."[2] And "whosoever love not Christ more than father, mother, wife, child, yea, and their own lives, cannot be his disciples."[3] Their present worldly life itself, if put in the balance, he must outweigh.

And if we put the comparison between our spiritual, eternal life and him; though he and that can never be in opposition,—as there may be often an opposition between him and this present life, so that the one is often quitted for the other,—yet neither is there a co-ordination, but the less worthy must be subordinate to the more worthy. We are to desire the enjoyment of him for *his own glory.* And yet here is a strange and admirable complication of these with one another. For if we enjoy him, delight and rest in him, as

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 25. [2] Ps. iv. 6, 7. [3] Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26.

our best and most satisfying good, we thereby glorify him as God,—we give him practically highest acknowledgments, we confess him the most excellent One. It is his glory to be the last term of all desires, and beyond which no reasonable desire can go farther.

And if we seek and desire his glory supremely, sincerely, and really, beyond and above all things,—when he is so glorified to the uttermost, or we are assured he will be, our highest desire is so far satisfied; and that turns to, or is, *our own* contentment. So that by how much more simply and sincerely we pass from and go out of ourselves, so much the more certainly we find our own satisfaction, rest, and full blessedness in him. As it is impossible the soul that loves him above itself can be fully happy while he hath not his full glory; so it is for the same reason equally impossible but it must be so when he hath.

(2.) Our delight must be suitable to the object,—the good to be delighted in,—in respect of the *permanency* of it. This is the most durable and lasting good. In this blessed object, therefore, we are to "rejoice evermore."[1] As in the matter of trust, we are required to "trust in the Lord for ever," because "in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength,"[2]—everlasting strength gives sufficient ground for everlasting trust; so it is in the matter of delight; a permanent, everlasting excellency is not answered but by a continual and everlasting delight. Therefore is it most justly said, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice,"[3]—alway, and still on. If through a long tract of time you have been constantly alway rejoicing in the Lord, begin again; I again say to you, 'Rejoice,' or rather never give over. The object will warrant and justify the act, let it be drawn forth to never so vast a length of time. You will still find a continual spring, unexhausted fulness,—a fountain never to be drawn dry. There will never be cause of diversion with this pretence, that now this object will yield no more,—it is

[1] 1 Thess. v. 16. [2] Isa. xxvi. 4. [3] Phil. iv. 4.

drained to the uttermost, and is now become an empty and gustless thing.

With other things it may be so; and therefore our delight doth not answer the natures of such things, but when we "rejoice in them as if we rejoiced not,"[1] they are as if they were not. All the things of this world are so; for "even the fashion of this world passeth away," as it is afterwards added.[2] Therefore no delight can fitly be taken in them, but what is volatile and unfixed as they are, lest otherwise it over-reach and run beyond its object. And how absurd and vain is it to have our hearts set upon that which is not, that takes wing and leaves us in the dirt! This object of delight is the 'I AM, yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever; without variableness and shadow of change.' Therefore the nature of it cannot allow us a reason wherefore, if we be delighted therein yesterday, we should not to-day; or if to-day, why not to-morrow, and so on to for ever. Whence, then, we may see no one can say he hath answered the import of this exhortation, "Delight thyself in the LORD," by having delighted in him at some time. It is continual as well as highest delight we are here called to. We see, then, thus far what we are called to, when we are here directed to delight ourselves in the Lord.

Secondly, We are next to show *how we are called to it*. And the matter itself will answer the inquiry. We are called to it according to what in itself it is. Now, it is both a *privilege* and a *duty*. We are therefore called to it, and accordingly are to understand the words,—

1. By way of *gracious invitation* to partake of a *privilege* which our blessed Lord would have us share and be happy in; no longer to spend ourselves in anxious pursuits and vain expectations of rest where it is not to be found, but that we retire ourselves to Him in whom we shall be sure to find it. Pity and mercy invite us here to place our delight, and take

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 30. [2] Ver. 31.

up our rest. And concerning this there is no question or imaginable doubt.

2. By way of *authoritative command;* for we must know that delight in God is to be considered not only under the notion of a *privilege* unto which we may esteem ourselves entitled, but also of a *duty* whereto we are most indispensably obliged. This is a thing not so much not understood, as not considered and seriously thought on, by very many; and the not considering it proves no small disadvantage to the life of religion. It occurs to very many, more familiarly, under the notion of a high favour and a great vouchsafement,—as indeed it is,—that God will allow any of the sons of men to place their delights in himself; but they at least *seem* to think it is only the privilege of some special favourites, of whom, because they perhaps are conscious they have no cause to reckon themselves, they are therefore very secure in the neglect of it. And thus is the pretence of modesty and humility very often made an umbrage and shelter to the vile carnality of many a heart; and a want of fitness is pretended and cherished at the same time as an excuse. But whereas they do not delight in God, they never may; for he that is unfit to-day, and never therewithal applies himself with seriousness to the endeavour of becoming fit, is likely to be more unfit to-morrow, and so be as much excused always as now; and by the same means at length excuse himself from being happy, but never from having been the author of his own misery. But what! is it indeed no duty to love God? Is that become no duty which is the very sum and comprehension of all duties? Or, can they be said to love him, that take no pleasure in him,—that is, to love him without loving him? It is, indeed, wonderful grace that there should be such a contexture of our happiness and duty; that, by the same thing wherein we are obedient, we also become immediately, in the same degree, blessed; and that the law of God in this case hath this very import,—*an obligation upon us to blessedness.* But, in the mean time, we should not forget that God's authority and honour are con-

cerned herein, as it is our *duty;* as well as our own happiness, as it is our *privilege;* and that we cannot injure ourselves in this matter without also robbing God.

Delight in God is a great piece of homage to him,—a practical acknowledgment of his sovereign excellency, and perfect, all-comprehending goodness. When we retire from all the world to him, we confess him better than all things besides; that we have none in heaven or earth that we esteem worthy to be compared with him. But when our hearts are averse to him, and will not be brought to delight in him, since there is somewhat in the meanwhile wherein we do delight, we do as much as say,—yea, we more significantly express it than by saying,—that, *whatever that is, it is better than he;* yea, that such a thing is good, and he is not. For as not believing him is a denial of his truth,—the making him a liar,—not delighting in him, is equally a denial of his goodness, and consequently even of his Godhead itself.

And since we find the words are here laid down plainly in a preceptive form, "Delight thyself in the LORD," can any think themselves after this at liberty to do so or not? It is true that they who are in no disposition hereto have somewhat else to do in order to that, (of which hereafter); but, in the mean time, how forlorn is their case who have nothing to excuse their sin by but sin! and who, instead of extenuating their guilt, do double it!

Yea, and we are further to consider, that it is not only commanded by a *mere simple* precept, but that this precept hath its *solemn sanction;* and that not only by promise here expressly annexed (of which hereafter), but also of implied threatening, that we shall not else have the desires of our hearts, but be necessarily unsatisfied and miserable,—which is also in many other places expressed plainly enough. Great penalty is due upon not delighting in God, even by the gospel-constitution itself; which is not so unreasonably formed as to require more in this matter than is suitable to the object itself, and is framed so indulgently as to accept much less than is proportionable thereto, and yet within the capacity

also of a reasonable soul. So that, though the very nature of the thing doth plainly dictate a rule by which this matter is to be estimated and judged, yet this other rule gives considerable abatement and allowance;—that is, it being considered what the *object* claims and challenges as by its own proper excellency due to it, and what the *subject* is, by its own nature, capable of, not only doth it hence appear that delight in God is a duty, but that the soul ought to rise to that highest pitch of delight in him,—that is, unto the highest the soul is naturally capable of. The very law of nature, resulting from the reference and comparison of our nature unto God's own, requires so much, that we love, or delight in him, "with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our might, and with all our strength." He deserves from us our very uttermost. Yet this is by the gospel-constitution required with indulgence and abatement, not as to the matter required, but as to the manner of requiring it. The matter required is still the same, so as that the purest and highest delight in God doth not cease to be a duty, or any gradual defect thereof cease to be a sin. The gospel doth make no change of the natures of things;—makes nothing cease to be due to God from us which the law of nature made due; nor renders any defect innocent which is in its own nature culpable and faulty. Therefore the same pitch of delight in God is still due and required that ever was. But that perfection is not, finally and without relief, required in the same manner and on the same terms it was; that is, it is not by the gospel required under remediless penalty, as it was. For the law of nature, though it made not a remedy simply impossible, yet it provided none; but the gospel provides one.

Yet not so but the same penalty also remains in itself due and deserved which was before. For as the gospel takes not away the dueness of any part or degree of that obedience which we did owe to God naturally, so nor doth it take away the natural dueness of punishment for disobedience in any kind or degree of it. Only it provides that (upon the very valuable consideration which it makes known) it becomes to

us a remissible debt, and actually remitted to them who come up to the terms of it. Not that it should be in itself no debt, for then nothing were remitted; nor yet, when it so provides for the remission of defects in this part of our duty, doth it remit the substance of the duty itself, or pardon any defects of it to any but such who are found sincere in this, as well as the other parts of that obedience which we owe. Others, who, after so gracious overtures, remain at their former distance, and retain their aversion, enmity, and disaffection to God, it more grievously, and most justly, threatens and punishes as implacable, and who will upon no terms return into a state of friendship and amity with their Maker, whom they hated without cause, and do now continue strangers and enemies to him without excuse; so that the very blood of the reconciling Sacrifice cries against them.[1]

And surely since, as was formerly said, it is God in Christ that is *the entire object of this delight or love*, it is a fearful penalty that is determined upon them that do not so place it, when it is said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."[2] And when also it is said, "Grace be upon all them that do,"[3] it is plainly implied that the penalty belongs to all them that do not, "love him in sincerity." Of which *sincerity* therefore of delight in God—to keep within the compass of our present theme—it is necessary we be well informed; as we may be from what hath been said before; that is,—

(1.) That we delight in him *supremely*, and above all things else—namely, with our highest and deepest complacency of will. For it is not necessary, nor ordinarily possible, that our delight in him should be ever accompanied with such sensible agitation of the corporeal spirits as we find in reference to merely sensible objects: which is not essential to such delight, but an accident that follows union with the body; and more frequently, and to a greater degree, in some tempers of body than others. But it is necessary there be that

[1] Heb. x. 24. [2] 1 Cor. xvi. 22. [3] Eph. vi. 24.

practical estimation of him, and propension towards him, as the best and most excellent good, as that we be in a preparation of mind and heart to forego whatever can come into any competition with him for his sake; that though we do not thus delight in him so much as we should, yet we do *more than in anything else.*

(2.) That we *continue* herein; that this be the constant, habitual temper of our spirits towards him; that we cleave to him with purpose of heart, as not only the most excellent, but the most permanent object of our delight, having settled the resolution with ourselves, "This God shall be our God for ever and ever; he shall be our God and guide even unto death;"[1] and that there be frequent actual workings of heart towards him agreeable to such a temper, though they are not so frequent as they ought.

Which account we give of this sincerity of delight in God, not to encourage any to take up with the lowest degree of that sincerity, but that none may be encouraged, upon their own mistake in this matter, to take up with anything short of it: and that we may see whence to take our rise in aiming at the highest pitch thereof: and that we may, understanding the highest intenseness and most constant exercise of delight in God that our natures are capable of, to be our duty, understand also, that, in reference to our gradual defects and intermissions herein, we ought to be deeply humbled, as being faulty; not unconcerned, as though we were innocent in this regard; that we need continual pardon upon these accounts; that we owe it to the blood of the Redeemer that such things can be pardoned; that we are not to reckon, or ever to expect that blood should stand us in stead to obtain our pardon for never delighting in God sincerely at all, but only, supposing we do it *sincerely*, that we do it not *perfectly*,—for most certainly, they whose hearts are never turned to him as their best and most sovereign Good or Portion, and Ruler or Lord, but do still remain

[1] Ps. xlviii. 14.

"alienated in their minds, and enemies through wicked works," will perish notwithstanding: and that we might the more distinctly, together with the apprehension of what we are called to in this matter, understand also how we are called to it—that is, not by an invitation only, that leaves us at liberty whether we will or will not, as we think fit; but by express command, and that also backed with the severe determination of most dreadful penalty in case of omission.

And thus we have in some measure shown the import of the direction in the text,—that we "delight ourselves in the LORD."

PART II.

CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF DELIGHT IN GOD.

WE have in the former Part extended the meaning of the words "Delight thyself in the LORD," beyond what they seem at first sight literally to signify: so as not to understand them merely as requiring that very single act of *delight* to be immediately and directly terminated on God himself, but to take them as comprehending also *the sum of all holy and religious converse with God*, that is, as it is delightful, or as it is seasoned—intermingled and as it were besprinkled —with delight; and, upon the same account, of all our other converse, so far as it is influenced by religion.

And, I doubt not, to such as shall attentively have considered what hath been said, it will be thought very reasonable to take them in that latitude; whereof the very letter of the text, as may be alleged for further justification hereof, is most fitly capable. For—as was noted upon another text, where we have the same phrase—the particle which we read "*in* the Lord," hath not that signification alone, but signifies also *with*, or *by*, or *besides*, or *before*, or *in presence of*: as if it had been said, 'Come and sit down with God; retire thyself

to him, and solace thyself in the delights which are to be found in his presence and converse, in walking with him, and transacting thy course as before him, and in his sight.' As a man may be said to delight himself with a friend, that puts himself under his roof, and, besides personal converse with himself freely enjoys the pleasure of all the entertainments, accommodations, and provisions, which he is freely willing to communicate with him, and hath the satisfaction which a sober person would take in observing the rules and order of a well-governed house.

According to this diverse import of the precept enjoining this duty, it will be requisite to speak diversely of the practice of the duty itself; that is, that we treat of *the practice and exercise of delight*;—1. As a thing *adherent to the other duties of religion*; and, 2. As it is *a distinct duty of itself*.—

First, As to the former, our business will be to treat of *the exercise of religion as delightful*. Now religion is delightful naturally and in itself; and makes a man's other actions, even that are not in themselves acts of religion, delightful also, so far as they are governed and influenced by it, if that religion be true—that is, if it be living, such as proceeds from a principle of divine life. Being, therefore, now to treat of the practice of this duty—whereof the account hath been already given—our discourse must aim at and endeavour these two things, the former as leading and subservient to the latter—namely, that we may not take up, and rest or let our practice terminate in a religion which is not naturally and in itself delightful; and, that we seek after and improve in that which is.

First, That religion which is not so, we have great reason not to acquiesce in, or be contented with, for it is plainly such as will not defray itself, or bear its own charges, as having only cumber and burden in it, no use or end; I mean the dead formality of religion only. We find it natural and pleasant to carry about with us our own living body; but who would endure (how wearisome and loathsome a task were it!) to lug to and fro a dead carcass? It will be upon

this account needful to insist in showing more distinctly, what sort of religion it is that is in itself wholly undelightful, and propound some things to consideration concerning it that may tend to beget a dislike of it, and so incline us to look farther :—

1. That we may know what we are *not* to take up with; because our present subject confines us to this one measure of religion, that it be *delightful*, it will be proper to limit our discourse to this character only of the religion we are to pass from as vain and worthless, namely, that which is without delight; which it also will be sufficient to insist on to our present purpose. For since, as hath been largely shown, the delightfulness of the religion which is true and living is intrinsical and most natural to it, it will therefore be certainly consequent,—that which is not delightful is dead, and can serve for nothing.

And yet here it will be necessary, for caution, to insert,—

(1.) That even such religion as is true and living, and consequently in itself delightful, yet may by accident sometimes not appear to be thought so; because either variety of occasions may divert from minding, or some imbittering distemper of spirit may hinder the present relishing of that pleasure which is truly in it. As a man may eat and feed on that which is very savoury and good, and yet, though his taste be not vitiated, but because he reflects not, may not every moment have that present apprehension that it is so; much more if the organs of taste be under a present distemper. But if they be not so, any one's asking him how he likes that dish,—because that occasions a more express animadversion,—will also draw from him an acknowledgment that it is pleasant and savoury.

(2.) That a dead religion may be thought delightful; and, through the ill temper of the subject, a pleasure may be apprehended in it which doth not naturally arise from it; that is, the mere external part of religion may be flexible, and be accidentally perverted into a subserviency to some purposes which religion of itself intends not; in respect

whereof a delight may injuriously (and as by a rape) be taken in it: as it is said by the prophet of a hypocritical people, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness; ..... they take delight in approaching to God."[1]

Therefore that which is here intended is not that the religion should be rejected in some present exercises whereof we have not the actual relish of a present pleasure, as that should not be embraced wherein upon any whatsoever terms we find it; but that which can rightfully, and upon just terms, afford us none, and which, upon our utmost inquiry and search, cannot in reason,—as it is not unfit that spiritual reason should be employed in making a judgment what may,—be thought spiritually delectable.

We shall therefore, in some particular heads, give a short account of such religion as rationally cannot but be judged undelightful, or which hath not that in it which can yield pleasure to a sound and well-complexioned spirit; but that if any be taken therein, that very pleasure is so unnatural and out of kind, as to be the argument rather of a disease in the subject than of any real goodness in the thing itself.

Whereunto we only premise this twofold general rule, whereby an undue and unnatural delight may be estimated and judged of:—(1.) That such delight may be justly deemed unnatural which is taken in anything besides, and with the neglect of, the proper use and end which it most fitly serves for. (2.) Such as is accompanied with a real hurt greater than the delight can countervail, or as is so far from taking in profit and benefit in conjunction with it, as that the damage and prejudice which it cannot recompense is inseparable from it. Which rules will be the more fitly applicable to the present case; for that—as hath been formerly observed—the delight which accompanies the acts and exercises of religion, or that flows from it, though it be natural thereto, yet is not the only or chief end of those acts,

[1] Isa. lviii. 2.

but they have another more important end, unto the prosecution whereof by such acts delight is only adherent: whence the delight cannot but be most preposterous and perverse which is taken in such things as do either not serve the more principal design of religion, or, much more, that are repugnant and destructive of it.

By these rules we may plainly see what delight in the general is to be accounted undue. As by the former rule we would justly reckon that an undue delight which a man should take in his food, if he only please himself with the looking on the handsome garnishing of the dishes, which he loathes in the mean time and refuses to taste; or which a covetous miser takes in having wealth hoarded up, which he is pleased often to view, and cannot endure to use. And by the latter, that were most irrational delight which in a fever one should take in gratifying his distempered appetite, whereby he doth not so much relieve nature as feed his disease.

And so we may say that religion is undelightful,—that is, not duly delightful,—

(1.) Which consists wholly in *revolving in one's own mind the notions that belong to religion, without either the experience or the design and expectation of having the heart and conversation formed according to them.* So the case is with such as content themselves to yield the principles of religion true, and behold with a notional assent and approbation the connection and agreement of one thing with another, but do never consider the tendency and aim of the whole, or that the truth of the gospel is "the doctrine that is according to godliness,"[1] or such as is pursuant to the design of making men godly, of transforming them into the image of God, and framing them to an entire subjection to his holy and acceptable will; that bethink not themselves the truth is never learned as it is in Jesus, except it be to "the renewing the spirit of the mind, the putting off the old man, and the

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 3.

putting on of the new."[1] When this is never considered, but men do only know that they may know, and are never concerned further about the great things of God than only to take notice that such things there are offered to their view which carry with them the appearance of truth, but mind them no more than the affairs of Utopia, or the world in the moon; what delight is taken in this knowledge is surely most perverse. There is a pleasure, indeed, in knowing things, and in apprehending the coherence of one truth with another; but he that shall allow himself to speculate only about things wherein his life is concerned, and shall entertain himself with delight in agitating in his mind certain curious general notions concerning a disease or a crime that threatens him with present death, or what might be a remedy or defence in such a case, without any thought of applying such things to his own case, or that the case is his own,—one may say of such pleasure, 'It is mad;' or of this delight, 'What doth it?' Or he that only surfeits his eye with beholding the food he is to live by, and who in the mean time languishes in the want of appetite, and a sickly loathing of his proper nutriment; surely such a one hath a pleasure that no sober man would think worth the having.

And the more any one doth *only notionally* know in the matters of religion, so as that the temper of his spirit remains altogether unsuitable and opposite to the design and tendency of the things known, the more he hath lying ready to come in judgment against him: and if therefore he count the things excellent which he knows, and only please himself with his own knowledge of them, it is but a like case as if a man should be much delighted to behold his own condemnation written in a fair and beautiful hand; or as if one should be pleased with the glittering of that sword which is directed against his own heart, and must be the present instrument of death to him: and so little pleasant is the case of such a person in itself, who thus satisfies his own curiosity

[1] Eph. iv. 22—24.

with the concernments of eternal life and death, that any serious person would tremble on his behalf, at that wherein he takes pleasure, and apprehend just horror in that state of the case whence he draws matter of delight.

(2.) It is yet a more insipid and gustless religion which too many place in some *peculiar opinions, that are either false and contrary to religion, or doubtful and cumbersome to it, or little and inconsiderable, and therefore certainly alien to it and impertinent.* For if that religion only be truly delightful which hath a vital influence on the heart and practice—as that must needs be indelectable which is only so notionally conversant about the greatest truths as that it hath no such influence,—much more is that so which is so wholly conversant about matters either opposite or irrelative hereto, as that it can have none. It must here be acknowledged that some doctrines, not only not revealed in the word of God, but which are contrary thereto, may, being thought true, occasion the excitation of some inward affection, and have an indirect influence to the regulating of practice also, so as to repress some grosser enormities: as the false notions of pagans concerning the Deity, which have led them to idolatry, have struck their minds with a certain kind of reverence of invisible powers, and perhaps rendered some more sober and less vicious than had they been destitute of all religious sentiments.

And yet the good which hath hence ensued is not to be referred to the *particular principles of idolatry*, which were false, but to *the more general principles of religion*, which were true. Yea, and though such false principles, viewed alone and by themselves, may possibly infer somewhat of good, yet that is by accident only, and through the short-sightedness and ignorance of them with whom they obtain; who, if they did consider their incoherence with other common notions and principles most certainly true, would receive by them, if thought the only principles of religion, so much the greater hurt, and become so much the more hopelessly and incurably wicked: as most manifestly the principles which, looked upon

by themselves, while they are reckoned true, do lead to idolatry, and consequently by that mistake only to some religion, do yet, being really false, lead to atheism, and of themselves tend to subvert and destroy all religion. Therefore such doctrines as cohere not with the general frame of truth, whatever their particular aspect may be, considered apart and by themselves, are yet *in their natural tendency* opposite and destructive to the true design of religion; and the pleasure which they can any way afford is only stolen and vain; such as a person takes in swallowing a potion that is pleasant, but which, if it perform what belongs to it, he must with many a sickly qualm refund and disgorge back again.

We also acknowledge some *truths of less importance* may be said to concern practice, though not so *immediately*. Nor is it, therefore, the design of this discourse to derogate from any such that are of apparently divine revelation or institution; which, however they justly be reckoned less than some other things, yet for that very reason, as they are revealed by God for such an end, are by no means to be esteemed little or inconsiderable—be their subserviency to the great design of religion never so remote. Upon the account of which subserviency they are also to be esteemed delectable,—that is, in proportion thereto; but when they are so esteemed beyond that proportion, and are exalted into an undue preference to their very end itself, so as that, in comparison of them, the great things of religion are reckoned low, frigid, sapless things; when men set their hearts upon them abstractly, and without consideration of their reference and usefulness to the greater things of religion,—the delight that is so taken in them argues but the disease of the mind that takes it, and so great a degree of dotage, that a serious person would wonder how men can please themselves with such matters, without considering, and with the neglect of, so great things they have relation to.

(3.) And hither is to be referred the much less rational pleasure which is taken by some in the *mere dress* wherewith

such notions and opinions may be artificially clothed by themselves or others; rhetorical flourishes, a set of fine words, handsome cadences and periods, fanciful representations, little tricks and pieces of wit; and, which cannot pretend so high, pitiful quibbles and gingles, inversions of sentences, the pedantic rhyming of words, yea, and an affected tone, or even a great noise,—things that are neither capable of gratifying the Christian nor the man; without which even the most important weighty matters do to so squeamish stomachs seem gustless and unsavoury, and are reckoned dull and flat things. And most plain it is,—though it is not strange that so trifling minds should impose upon themselves by so thin a sophism,—that such are in a great mistake whose delight being wholly taken up in these trifles, do hereupon think they taste the delights of religion: for these are nothing of it, are found about it only accidentally, and by a most unhappy accident too;—as ill (for the most of those things) agreeing to it, and no more becoming it, than a fool's coat doth a prudent, grave person; and the *best of them* agreeing to it but in common with anything else about which such arts may be used, so that they are no way anything of it, or more peculiarly belonging to it, than to any theme or subject besides unto which such ornaments, as they are thought, can be added. How miserably, therefore, do they cheat themselves, who, because they hear with pleasure a discourse upon some head of religion, thus garnished according to their idle, trifling humour; and because they are taken with the contrivance of some sentences, or affected with the loudness of the voice, or have their imagination tickled with some fantastical illustrations, presently conclude themselves to be in a religious transport;—when the things that have pleased them have no affinity or alliance with religion, befall to it but by chance, and are in themselves things quite of another country!

(4.) Of the like strain is the religion that is made up all of *talk*. And such like are that sort of persons who love to discourse of those great things of God wherewith it was never

their design or aim to have their hearts stamped, or their lives commanded and governed; who invert that which was the ancient glory of the Christian church, "We do not speak great things, but live them;" and are pleased with only the noise of their own most commonly insignificant, senseless words: unto whom how grateful a relish would that precept have, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak!"

And how much to be regretted a thing is it, that the delights of practical, living religion should be so lost, and vanish into a mere lip-labour! Things of this nature are to be estimated by their end and the temper of spirit which accompanies them; which, unto a serious and prudent observer, are commonly very discernible, and easy to be distinguished. It is an amiable, lovely thing, to behold those that are intent upon the great business of religion themselves, provoking others also with serious gravity "unto love and good works." And it will ever stand as a monumental character of them that "feared the Lord," that "they spake often one to another,"[1] upon this account. But the pretence of this is odious, when the thing designed is nothing but self-recommendation and the spirit of the pretenders is visibly vain and empty; and when it is apparent they take delight, not in the things they speak of, but only in this thing itself,—speaking much. No breath is then more fulsome; and the better the things are, the worse it is to have no more savour of them. Again,—

(5.) The religion is akin to this which stands all in *hearing*. It is as remote, at least, from the heart, when it is wholly placed in the ear as when it is all in the tongue; as it is with them that are "hearers only, not doers of the word, deceiving their own selves;"[2] when the preacher is to them "as a very lovely song of one that can play well on an instrument, and they hear his words, but do them not."[3] And it is natural to the same sort of persons to be pleased indifferently with either of these, as the Athenians were "in hearing or telling some new thing;" only that this difference

[1] Mal. iii. 16. [2] Jas. i. 22. [3] Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

most commonly appears with the persons we intend, that when the things they delight to hear must be ever new or at least new dressed, the things they speak shall be everlastingly the same. How perverse a delight is that! Whereas it is the glory of substantial religion that the principal things of it can never grow old or be dry, their ears still itch after novelties,—a plain argument that it is not religion itself that pleases them—which cannot change,—but the variable accessory modes of representing it. However, there is certainly very often a distemper appearing among those that profess religion, in coveting to hear unto excess and beyond what is either suitable or designed unto use and profit; when the pleasure of a delightful revolving of the ever fresh and fragrant truths of the gospel and reducing them to answerable practice, is lost and stifled by heaping on of more than can be digested; and many a hopeful birth of pious and holy dispositions, affections, and good works, is suppressed or enfeebled by an untimely superfetation. Lastly,—

(6.) It is a most undelightful religion which consists entirely in the *external additaments and forms of worship* which this or that party have chosen to affix to it, yea, though those forms be never so certainly of Divine prescription: which, however God hath appointed them, were never appointed or intended by him to be our religion, but to be subservient helps and means to it. Being enlivened by it, they are comely and delightful; but severed and cut off from it, or the course of vital spirit that should flow into them being obstructed and repressed, they have no more pleasure in them than a dead arm or finger. Such Divine appointments themselves, severed from the things wherein substantial religion consists, have been an abomination to the Lord: "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth,"[1] etc. And then, sure, there is little reason they should be a delight to us. If they be, it is as fond and trifling a delight as,—when one hath the opportunity of conversing with some excellent person,—to neglect all his wise sayings and

[1] Isa. i. 14.

pleasant, instructive discourses, and only to please one's self in viewing his handsome apparel; yea, though I should know at the same time that I thereby greatly displease him whom, as is also supposable, I were greatly concerned to please. Thus it is with them that mind only the solemnity of God's worship, not the design. And more gross the matter is with such as, by their observance of the external modes of religion, think to expiate the badness of their most vicious conversation; — that will steal and murder and commit adultery, oppress the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and yet presume to stand before the Lord in his house, and cry, "The temple of the LORD,"[1] etc. This is the pharisaical religion, that is scrupulous in tithing mint, anise, cummin, and neglects the weighty things of the law, — justice, judgment, and truth. These men delight in what not only is dead in itself, but will be mortal unto them. And if the *divine* institution of the things wherewith they so vainly please themselves will not bear them out, much less *their own;* be their discriminating denomination or profession what it will.

And now all these things, whether severally or together, and whatever else of like kind, do at the best make but a dead and consequently an undelightful religion, such as hath no pleasure in it because it hath no life. It remains, therefore,—

2. To show *how unfit such a religion is to be chosen or rested in.* And surely since, as appears from what was formerly said, the persuading of men to become religious or godly is but an inviting them to a state and course wherein they may delight themselves with God or to a life of pure and heavenly pleasure, that is only the vain show of religion which affords nothing of that pleasure. And how unreasonable and foolish is it, when religion itself is the thing we pretend, to let ourselves be mocked,—as we mock others, and vainly attempt to mock Him also who is not to be mocked,—with the mere empty show and appearance of it!

[1] Jer. vii. 4.

That we may be here somewhat more particular, let it be considered,—

(1.) That the religion which is in itself undelightful is, for the same reason for which it is so, *incapable of growth;* that is, because it is *a dead thing.* For that reason it is without delight, and for the same reason admits not of improvement. It wants the self-improving principle. "He that drinks of the water," saith our Saviour, "which I shall give him, it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."[1] That only principle of all true religion and godliness, the Divine nature, "the seed of God," is of that heavenly tendency, it aims and aspires upward, and will never cease shooting up till it reach heaven; and the pleasure and delightfulness of it stands much in its continual springing up towards a perfect state,—from a grain of mustard-seed to the tallness of a cedar. It is pleasant to behold its constant, undecaying greenness and verdure;—such as renders its subject "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth fruit in season, whose leaf also doth not wither, and whatsoever he doth prospers;"[2] or, "as plants set in the house of the LORD, that flourish in the courts of their God; that shall still bring forth fruit even in old age, and be fat and flourishing."[3] The dead, dry forms or other appendages of religion, that have no communion with a living root, or the religion that is only made up of these, gives no such hope of improvement: a great and most considerable prejudice against anything that pretends to the name of religion! which, being at first an imperfect thing,—as that especially which itself is but pretence and shadow cannot but be,—if it shall never be expected to be better, can have little claim or title to any excellency. The value even of true religion, though it be of an excellent nature and kind, stands much in the hopefulness and improvableness of it; and is not so much to be considered in respect of *what it is,* as *what it shall come to.* This lank, spiritless religion, as soon as you assume

[1] John iv. 14. [2] Ps. i. 3. [3] Ps. xcii. 13, 14.

and take it up, you know the best of it. It is not of a growing, thriving kind;—never expect better of it. It is true the notional knowledge, opinionativeness, and external observances, which we have spoken of, may be so increased as a heap of sand may be; but the religion of such grows not as a thing that hath life in it, by vital self-improvement.

(2.) Nor for the same reason can it be *a lasting thing*. For it wants what should maintain it. It will, as a vesture, wear and grow old; or, being as a cloak put on to serve a present turn, is, when that turn is served, as easily thrown off; that is, being found to be more cumbersome than useful. What hath living union with a man's own self, it is neither his ease nor convenience; he neither affects nor can endure, to lay it aside. It is given as a character of a hypocrite,—one who therefore must be understood to carry with him some show and face of religion and to want the living root and principle of it,—that he is inconstant in his religion: "Will he at all times call upon God?"[1]—or, 'Will he be constantly religious?' The interrogative form of speech implies more than a mere negative; that is, doth not only say that he will not at all times call upon God, but that it is absurd to say or think that he will. For it is an appeal to common reason in the case; as if it had been said, 'Can any man think that such an one's religion will be lasting?' It imports a disdain it should be thought so. 'What! he call upon God at all times? a likely thing! no; the matter is plain, his religion is measured by his secular interest, and he will only be so long religious as will serve that purpose.' And the reason is plainly assigned in the foregoing words, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" His religion hath no delight with it; it is a languid, faint, spiritless thing,—a dead form. If it had life, it would have pleasure in it; and then the same vital principle that would make it pleasant would make it lasting and permanent also.

(3.) While it doth last, *it wants the fruit and profit which*

[1] Job xxvii. 10.

should be designed and sought by religion. Even for the same reason for which it is without delight, it is also fruitless and vain,—that is, because it hath no life in it; so that all that is done in this way of religion is only labour and toil to no purpose. And what do or can we propose to ourselves from religion, as the proper design of it, but to have our spirits fitted to the honouring and enjoying of God, unto service to him and blessedness in him; and that we may hereupon actually both serve and enjoy him? Both these chiefly depend upon his favourable acceptance of us. He will neither reckon himself served by us nor allow himself to be enjoyed, if he be not pleased with us. And how shall we expect to please him with that wherewith the more our minds come to be rectified and made conformable to the rule of righteousness and life, the more impossible it is that we can be pleased ourselves? Can we please him by a religion that is in itself unsavoury, spiritless and dead, and that affords not to ourselves the least relish of true pleasure? And partly, the success of our religion in the mentioned respects depends upon the due temperament our spirits receive by it. But what good impression can that light, chaffy, empty religion that hath been described, ever be hoped to make there? Is it a likely means of refining and bettering our spirits? Even as it is void of spiritual delight, it is also of spiritual benefit; for certainly our spirits are like to embrace and retain nothing in which they can take no pleasure. How vain, then, is that religion by which we can neither please God nor profit ourselves!

(4.) It ought to be considered how foolish a thing it is and unworthy of a reasonable creature, *to do that in a continued course and series of actions wherein we can have no design and do aim at nothing.* Even they that place their religion in things so remote and alien to the spirit and power of it, do yet spend a considerable part of their lifetime in those things. And how becoming is it of a man to have spent so much of his time in doing nothing! and that from week to week or from day to day, the seasons should return of which he hath

constantly this to say, 'Now comes the time of doing that whereof I can give no account why I do it!'—that there should be so constant a defalcation of such portions of time for that which a man can neither call business nor recreation,—which tends to no advantage in any kind. For it tends not to promote his *secular* interest, but in so indirect and bye a way and with so sinister and basely oblique respects, as an honest man would abhor and an ingenuous man be ashamed to profess; and his *spiritual* and *eternal* interest much less. This were therefore the same thing as to proclaim one's self a fool or a vain trifler;—the things that have been instanced in, considered so abstractly from the substance of religion as we have considered them, being such, some of them, as carry not with them so much as that very "show of wisdom"[1] of which the apostle speaks; and others of them so faint a show as it ill becomes a wise man to be pleased with, while they do his better part no good, and carry not that show in any "provision," as that word τιμή sometimes signifies, for the satisfying of the flesh.

And yet it is to be withal remembered, that this waste and lost time of their life is all that such persons allot to their everlasting concernments; and that the things which have been mentioned—some or other of them, for all do not always concur with the same persons,—are not made *subservient to*, but are substituted *in the room and stead of*, the religion by which those concernments should be provided for. And is this a wise provision for eternity? What, man! a few empty, unimproved notions! a by-opinion or two! the flourishes of a little pedantic art tickling thy toyish fancy! the motion of thy (*only*) busy and labouring tongue! or the thirst and satisfaction of thy vain ear! the bowing of thy hypocritical knee!—are these all that thou designest, or wilt mind to do for thy soul? Are these like well to supply the place of living religion,—to serve thee instead of inward acquaintance with God? of being really and habitually good and holy? of

[1] Col. ii. 23.

doing good, and walking in the path of life? What a soul hast thou, that can live upon chaff and air, and be sustained by the wind! Hast thou no need of quickening influence from God? no hunger after the heavenly, hidden manna and the fruits of the tree of life? What use makest thou of thy understanding or of the reason of a man, when thou thinkest such empty vanities as thou trustest in can do the office or attain the ends of true religion? How much more rational were it to pretend to nothing of religion at all, than to think such an one will serve the turn!

(5.) Consider *what reflections are likely to be made upon this matter hereafter, when thy short course in this world is run out.* Will it be a grateful remembrance to thee, that thou wast so long hovering about the borders of religion? and wast at the very door and wouldst not enter in? that thou didst so often think and speak and hear of the things wherein religion stood, but wouldst never allow thyself to taste the pleasant relishes thereof? to have been so nigh to the kingdom of God, and yet an alien to it, to the "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," wherein it consists? that thou didst only please thyself with the painted casket,—made fine, as thou thoughtst, but only with thine own pencil,—wherein so rich a jewel was; and retaining *that*, threwest away *this* as a thing of nought? Will not these be wounding thoughts?

(6.) Let it be seriously pondered *how offensive it must be to the jealous God, that any should thus trifle with him and his holy things, under a show and pretence of religion and devotion to him.* Not to please him by the sincerity and truth of our religion, loses the end and reward we would expect. But that is not all; to provoke him by the hypocritical pretence and abuse of it, cannot but infer a sharp revenge, which it may be we expected not.

And let us bethink ourselves how high the provocation is! Either we design to please, honour, and enjoy him by that irrational and undelightful course of religion, or we do not. If we do not, this signifies nothing but highest contempt and defiance of him, and that we care not for his favour, nor fear

his displeasure. Yea, inasmuch as such religion is *pretended* as a homage to him, it is nothing really but most profane and insolent mockery; as if we would join in the same breath and in the same act, "Hail, Jesus!" and "Crucify him!" and at once invest him with the purple robe, and spit in his face. But if we have such a design, and do really think to please him by such trifling with him, and that these vain fancies and formalities shall make amends for all our neglects of him through the whole course of our lives besides, —then how vile thoughts have we of him! What do we make of the God we serve? How justly may that be applied to us, "Ye worship ye know not what!"[1] Who gave us our idea of that ever-blessed Being? It is not God, but a despicable idol of our own creating, we are thinking to please. We may see how well he is pleased with the external show and the appendages of religion (which, being his own appointments, would in conjunction and in subserviency thereto have signified somewhat, but disjoined from it and accompanied with the neglect and abandoning of real piety and righteousness, signified nothing but an affront to him) in that remonstrance by the prophet: "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol."[2] He is pleased with their religion as He would be with murder, profaneness, and idolatry. And is it strange this should be His estimate, when He is hereby practically represented as such an one that will not be displeased with real wickedness, and that will be pleased with the thinnest and most superficial show of devotion?

They therefore make a fair hand of their religion, who are so far from pleasing God by it and advantaging themselves, that they wound their own souls,—as they are most like to do that handle so awkwardly such an edged tool,—and render God their most avowed enemy! The religion, then, which

[1] John iv. 22. [2] Isa. lxvi. 3.

hath no delight in it, hath so much of folly, incommodity, and mischief, that, measuring it by the rules which were premised, we may see sufficient reason why such a religion should not be chosen or rested in, and that we are concerned to look farther. Wherefore we proceed next,—

Secondly, To the other head we proposed,—the positive judgment we are to make, *what religion is fit to be chosen, and wherein we may safely acquiesce;* whereof we shall only give the account which the subject we have in hand allows to be given,—that is, that it be *such as is in itself rationally and justly delectable.* And though religion is not to be chosen only or chiefly for the delightfulness of it, yet since, as we have seen, only that religion is true which is delightful, that only which is delightful is fit to be chosen. So that this is a certain character, though not the chief cause, of the eligibleness of religion. And when it is so expressly enjoined us as a duty to "delight ourselves in the Lord,"—if, as hath been shown, this be within the meaning of the precept, that in the general we delight ourselves in a way and course of religion, it is plain such religion only can be meant or intended as can afford us matter of delight, or as is in itself truly and really delectable. And here we shall not need to repeat what hath been so largely discoursed in the former Part, tending to show the rich matter of delight which the several exercises of true, living religion, and all the actions influenced and directed by it, do carry in them. It will only be requisite to offer somewhat, partly to direct, partly to excite unto that delightful, pleasant life.

1. For DIRECTION, let such *rules* be observed as these which follow :—

(1.) Endeavour to have *a mind well instructed in the knowledge of such things as more directly concern the common practice of a religious man, as such;* that is, to be thoroughly insighted into practical truths, or into that "truth which is after godliness." It hath been the merciful vouchsafement of the Divine goodness so to order it, that those things are plain and but few which are of more absolute necessity in religion,

as may be seen by the summary accounts which we find sometimes given thereof,—"Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:"[1] which two things, intimated to comprehend the whole counsel of God, do manifestly suppose the state of apostasy and express the way of remedy; whereinto when we are brought, how succinct and clear a recapitulation of our duty have we in that of our Saviour, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!" To a well-complexioned spirit, how comprehensive and full, how savoury and acceptable, will these things appear! Nor would such an one part with the substantial fulness of these few words for all the treasures of both the Indies. How truly is it called, "That good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!"[2] And how fitly to be preferred before "thousands of gold and silver!" Things of highest value are not bulky; their excellency is the greater by being contracted, and that, being in themselves precious, they are so conveniently portable. How easily are these dictates carried about with us through our whole course! And how universally useful are they for the well-guiding of it, to such as have a greater mind to do their duty than move questions about it!

Two things are both opposite to this rule, and not a little prejudicial to the delight of religious conversation,—by which it will appear how conducible to it the matter here directed is,—namely, *excessive curiosity in the speculation of truths* belonging to religion, without designing to refer them to practice, —which hath been animadverted on before; and an equally *excessive scrupulosity about matters of practice*. It were, indeed, an argument of a desperate mind, and destitute of any fear of God, to be careless what we do, and unconcerned whether the way we take, in this or that case, be right or wrong. But it is certain there may be an excess in this matter, and too often is; that is, there may be a scrupulosity which is

[1] Acts xx. 21. [2] Rom. xii. 2.

both causeless and endless. There is surely some medium in travelling, between a careless wandering we mind not whither, and a perpetual anxiety whether we be in our way or no, with often going back to inquire. This would quite destroy both the pleasure of the journey and the progress of it. Some difficulties may occur, which should justly occasion one to make a stand and consider; but probably very many cases that some do agitate with much disquiet to themselves and others, would soonest be expedited by sincerity, and reducing them to the law of love.

It would, however, make much for our pleasant, delightful walking on in the way of God, to have a mind informed once and established thoroughly in the belief of the principal doctrines of Christian religion, well furnished also with the most useful practical precepts, which might at every turn be ready at hand to be applied upon emergencies; which they whom predominant self-interest or corrupt inclination render not difficult to the apprehending of their duty,—our way is not usually otherwise so very intricate,—may cheerfully and innocently guide themselves by. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely;" though some men's way may, by the circumstances of their conditions, be much more perplexed than others', who are therefore concerned to be the more wary. But the difficult toil and tug that some have with themselves is, how by contrived explications they may make their rule bend and yield to their self-biassed humours and ends; which because they find it not easy to do with full satisfaction to their consciences, (that see more than they would have them, and are yet not of authority enough with them to govern and command their practice,) it is not strange they entangle and even lose themselves amongst thorns and briers, and meet with "little delight in their way." Wherefore,—

(2.) Be principally intent to have *your soul become habitually good and holy, by its own settled temper and complexion inclined and made suitable to the way of righteousness and life.* It was no doubt, with a very sweet gust and relish of pleasure that the Psalmist utters that gratulatory acknowledgment of the

Divine goodness in this, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake."[1] The paths of righteousness are very agreeable and pleasant to a restored, a sound and healthy soul; to one that is now got into a good habit and a settled state of spiritual strength. You may therefore take the meaning and substance of this precept in the apostle's more authoritative words, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God;"[2] as much as to say, You can never have a proof of it, the very palate of your soul will be vicious and still disaffected till then,—that is, till that transformation and renewing change hath passed upon you. Then it will be pleasant to you to know the will of God; your "delight will be in the law of the Lord, and in his law you will meditate both day and night." And it will be more pleasant to do it. You will esteem the words of his mouth as your appointed food; and it will be as your meat and drink to do his will. You can easily apprehend how toilsome and painful anything of business and labour is to a person that languishes under some enfeebling, lazy disease. A like case it is when you would put one upon doing of anything spiritually good, that is listless, indisposed, "to every good work reprobate." How will the heart recoil and give back! With how vehement a reluctation will it resist the proposal, as if you were urging it upon flames or the sword's point! "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be;"[3] but when once "the law of God is within your heart," you will "delight to do his will."[4] To one that is "born of God," and hath therefore "overcome the world," his "commands are not grievous."[5] Know, therefore, you must be good,—really and habitually so,—in order to your doing good with any delight; in conformity to the blessed God himself, your pattern, who therefore "exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth," as

[1] Ps. xxiii. 3. [2] Rom. xii. 2. [3] Rom. viii. 7. [4] Ps. xl. 8.
[5] 1 John v. 3, 4.

"delighting in these things."[1] You must be "partaker of a divine nature," and have the heart-rectifying communication before discoursed of, and become God's own workmanship a second time, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."[2] It is not to be hoped it can be delightful to act against inclination; or that a forced imitation of that good whereof you want the implanted vital principle, can be any more pleasing to you than it is to God, whom you cannot mock or impose upon by your most elaborate or specious disguises. And therefore, since that holy heart-rectitude must be had, it must be sought earnestly and without rest. Often ought heaven to be visited with such sighs and longings sent up thither: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed!"[3] And it should be sought with expectation of good speed and without despair; remembering we are told, if "we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened unto us;" yea, that our heavenly Father will much more readily give his Holy Spirit to them that ask, than you would bread to your child that calls for it, rather than a stone.

(3.) When once you find your spirit is become in any measure well inclined and begins to savour that which is truly good, know yet that *it needs your continual inspection and care, to cherish good principles and repress evil ones.* Your work is not done as soon as you begin to live; as care about an infant ceases not as soon as it is born. Let it be therefore your constant business to tend your inward man, otherwise all things will soon be out of course. God hath coupled delight with the labour of a Christian, not with the sloth and neglect of himself. The heart must then be "kept with all diligence,"[4] or 'above all keeping,' inasmuch as "out of it are the issues of life." All vital principles are lodged there; and only the genuine issues of such as are good and holy will yield you pleasure. The exercises of religion will be

[1] Jer. ix. 24. [2] Eph. ii. 10. [3] Ps. cxix. 5, 80. [4] Prov. iv. 23.

pleasant when they are natural and flow easily from their own fountain; but great care must be taken that the fountain be kept pure. There are other springs besides, which will be apt to intermingle therewith their bitter waters; or a root of bitterness whose fruit is deadly, even that "evil thing and bitter," "forsaking the Lord." I wonder not if they taste little of the delights of religion that take no heed to their spirits. Such a curse is upon the nature of man as is upon the ground which was cursed for his sake, (till the "blessing of Abraham through Jesus Christ" do take place, even "the promise of the Spirit,"[1]) that it brings forth naturally thorns and thistles, and mingles sorrows with his bread. But that promised blessing that will enable a man to eat with pleasure, comes not all at once; nor do the increases of it come on or the pleasant fruits of righteousness spring up, but in them that "give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity:" which would make "that we be not barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."[2] Otherwise, look in upon thy soul when thou wilt, and thou wilt have no other than the dismal prospect of miserable wastes and desolation. Consider it seriously, wretched man, who tillest thy field, but not thy soul; and lovest to see thy garden neat and flourishing, but lettest thy spirit lie as a neglected thing, and as if it were not thine.

We are directed, for the moderating of our care in our earthly concernments, to consider the lilies, how they grow without their own toil, and are beautifully arrayed without their spinning; but we are taught by no such instances to divert or remit our care of our inward man. To these concernments let us then apply and bend ourselves;—that is, carefully to observe the first stirrings of our thoughts and desires; to animadvert upon our inclinations as soon as they

[1] Gal. iii. 14. [2] 2 Pet. i. 5—8.

can come in view, upon our designs in their very formation; and inquire concerning each, Whence is it—from a good principle or a bad? Whither tends it—to good or hurt? Will not this design, if prosecuted, prove an unjustifiable self-indulgence? Does it not tend to an unlawful gratifying of the flesh, and fulfilling some lusts thereof? If so, let it be lopped off out of hand and the axe be laid even to the root: strike at it, favour it not. Think with thyself, 'This, if spared, will breed me sorrow; so much as I give to it, I take away from the comfort of my life, and spend of the stock of my spiritual delight in God. Shall I let sin, the tormentor of my soul, live, and be maintained at so costly a rate?' If any good inclination discover itself, cherish it, confirm and strengthen it. Look up, and pray down a further quickening influence. Say with thyself, now that heavenly Spirit of life and grace begins to breathe, 'More of this pleasant, vital breath, thou blessed and holy Spirit!' Account this a seed-time; now the light and gladness are a-sowing in thy soul,—which are wont to be for the righteous and upright in heart,—and do promise, ere long, a joyful harvest. But if thou wilt not observe how things go with thy soul, despair that they will ever go well.

(4.) Be frequent and impartial in the *actual exercise of gracious principles*, or in practising and doing as they direct. Your actual delight arises from and accompanies your holy actions themselves, and is to be perceived and tasted in them; not in the mere inclination to them which is not strong enough to go forth into act. And as these principles are more frequently exercised, they grow more lively and vigorous, and will thence act more strongly and pleasantly; so that your delight in doing good will grow with the principles it proceeds from.

But then you must be impartial and even-handed herein, as well as frequent; and run the whole compass of that duty which belongs to you as a Christian. "Exercise yourself,"—as we find the direction is,—"unto godliness;"[1] and in such

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 7.

acts and parts of godliness, chiefly and in the first place, as may be the exercise of the mind and spirit, in opposition to the bodily exercise (whether severities imposed upon, or performances that require the ministry of, that grosser part) to which this nobler kind of exercise is justly preferred. Turn the powers of your soul upon God; act seasonably the several graces of the Spirit that terminate directly upon him. Let none grow out of use; at sometimes repentance, at others faith; now your love, then your fear. None of these are placed in you, or are sanctified, in vain. Retire much with God; learn and habituate yourselves unto secret converse with him; contemplate his nature, attributes, and works, for your excitation to holy adoration, reverence, and praise.

And be much exercised in the *open solemnities* of his worship; there endeavouring that though your inward man bear not the only, it may the principal part. How delightful a thing is it to be paying actual, avowed homage to the great Lord of heaven and earth before angels and men! And never think your religious and devotional exercises can acquit you, or supply the want and excuse the absence of sobriety and righteousness. Exercise a just authority over yourselves; keep your imagination, passions, sensitive appetite, under a due restraint, so as to be moderate in your desires and enjoyments, patient as to your wants and sufferings. Do to others as you would be done unto; study common good; endeavour, so far as your capacity can extend, all about you may be the better for you; forbear and forgive the injurious, relieve the necessitous, delight in good men, pity the bad; be grateful towards friends, mild and unrevengeful towards enemies, just towards all; abhor to do not only a dishonest, but even a mean and unworthy act, for any self-advantage: and all this out of an awful and dutiful respect to God; by which the ordinary actions of your life may become as so many acts of religion or be directed and influenced thereby,—tinctured as it were with the savour of godliness. Pass thus, in your continual practice, through the whole circle of Christian duties and graces, with an equal respect to all God's com-

mandments, not so partially addicting yourselves to one sort of exercise as to disuse and neglect the rest; which kind of partiality is that which starves religion, and stifles the delight of it.

There are those that affect the reputation of being sober, just, kind, charitable persons, and do appear such, who yet are great strangers to God and to the more noble exercises of the Divine life; know not what belongs to communion with God, live not in his love and converse, savour not heaven, have not so much as the taste of the great vital powers of the world to come: others that pretend to much acquaintance with God, and are much taken up in discoursing of his love and of intimacies with him, that count justice and charity mean things and much beneath them; can allow themselves to be covetous, oppressive, fraudulent, wrathful, malicious, peevish, fretful, discontented, proud, censorious, merciless; and so glory in a religion which no one is the better for, and themselves least of all, and which is quite of another stamp from the "pure religion and undefiled"[1] which the apostle describes and recommends. And certainly their religion hath as little of pleasure in it to themselves, as it hath of beauty and ornament in the sight of others. So maimed a religion can be accompanied with little delight. Would it not detract much from the natural pleasure of a man's life, if he should lose an arm or a leg, or have them useless and unserviceable? or if he should be deprived of some of his senses or natural faculties, so as to be incapable of some of the more principal functions of life? And if we should suppose the new creature alike maimed and defective, will there not be a proportionable diminution of its delight? But the Spirit of God is the author of no such imperfect productions; and therefore the total absence of any holy disposition will not argue the true delight of such an one to be little, but none at all. However, let all the integral parts of the "new man" be supposed formed at first, and existing

[1] Jas. i. 27.

together; when this creature is thus entirely framed, it is our business to see to the due exercise, and thereby to the improvement and growth, of the several parts; wherein if one be neglected, it infers a general enfeeblement of the whole. "Let patience have its perfect work," saith that apostle, "that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing;"[1] implying, that not only the absence of that one grace, but its not being thoroughly exercised, would render us very defective Christians. We may say of the several members of this Divine "creature," as is said of the complex body of Christians, "If one suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all rejoice with it." Therefore, that you may experience the delightfulness of religion, see that in the exercise and practice of it you be entire, thorough Christians.

(5.) Be confirmed in the apprehension that religion is in itself a delightful thing, even *universally* and *in the whole nature of it;* whereby a double practical mistake and error will be avoided, that greatly obstructs and hinders the actual relish and sensation of that delight:—

i. That either religion is in the whole nature of it such a thing to which delight must be alien, and banished from it, as if nothing did belong to or could consist with it, but sour severities, pensiveness, and sad thoughts. Or else,—

ii. That if any delight did belong to it at all, it must be found only in peculiar, extraordinary assurances and persuasions of God's love; and be the attainment, consequently, of none but more eminent Christians.

That apprehension being thoroughly admitted, both these *mis*apprehensions fall and vanish. And it will take place, if it be duly considered, that there is a delight that will naturally arise from the congruity and fitness of actions in themselves and the facility of them;—that they flow easily from their proper principles. Whereupon there can be no true, vital act of religion but will be delightful. And we may

[1] Jas. i. 4.

appeal herein to the judgments of such as shall allow themselves to consider whether the matter do not evidently appear to be so, upon a serious review and revolving with themselves of the several gracious operations that proceed from the holy rectitude mentioned in the former Part;—as the acts of even repentance, self-abasement, self-denial, self-devoting, appearing to be in themselves most fit and becoming things,—and readily without force proceeding, as they cannot but do, from a rectified and well-disposed heart,—how can they but be pleasant? And it is much in our way to the experiencing of such delight, to be at a point with ourselves, and well resolved wherein it is to be sought and found.

(6.) However all the acts and operations of true and living religion be in themselves delightful, yet apply yourselves to the doing of them for a *higher reason* and with *a greater design than your own delight;* otherwise you destroy your own work therein and despoil your acts of their substantial, moral goodness, and consequently of their delightfulness also. That is not a morally good act, which is not referred to God and done out of at least an habitual devotedness to him, so as that he be the supreme end thereof. You would therefore, by withdrawing and separating their reference to God, ravish from them their very life and soul; yea, and perfectly nullify those of them that should be in themselves acts of religion: so as that in respect of all your actions, that separation were *unjust,* and as to these that should be direct acts of religion, impossible. Since, therefore, they are only delightful as they are vital acts, proceeding from a principle of Divine life, and that an habitual devotedness to God is that very comprehensive and most radical principle, you should, by designing your own delight in them supremely, counteract yourself and cross your own end; you should make them acts of idolatry, not religion; and set up your own self as the idol of jealousy, that receives the homage of them, instead of God: whereby the unlawful pleasure which you would engross to yourselves will turn all to gall and wormwood, and be bitterness in the end. That therefore you may taste the sweetness and plea-

sure which belong to a religious, godly life, your way must be to act on directly forward in the simplicity of your heart, doing all that you do to and for God. And thus that pleasure, because it is natural to such acts, will of its own accord result and arise to you; and so much the more by how much less you design for yourself in what you do. From that uprightness and sincerity of heart towards God it can never be separated. But to be a religious epicure, to pray, hear, meditate, do acts of justice and charity, only to please and humour yourselves, and that you may derive a kind of solace and satisfaction from your own work, is to undo your design and blast the delight which you covet. It follows while you seek it not; it flies from you while you so inordinately seek it.

(7.) Yet disallow not yourself *to taste and enjoy the pleasure of well-doing;* yea and, secondarily and in due subordination, *to design and endeavour that you may do so.* It is in itself a covetable and a lawful pleasure, so that it be not sought and entertained out of its own place. It is a promised pleasure. "The good man," it is said, "shall be satisfied from himself."[1] And it is by particular direction to be testified to the righteous, "They shall eat the fruit of their doings."[2] It is God's gracious allowance to them; which it is a part of gratitude and dutifulness to esteem and accept, yea, and with great admiration of the Divine goodness that hath made and settled such a conjunction between their duty and their delight;—that hath laid such laws upon them, as in the "keeping whereof there is great reward;"[3] whenas they might have been enjoined a meaner servitude and, by the condition and kind of their work, have been kept strangers to anything of delight therein.

That thankful acknowledgment of the bounty and goodness of God to them in the very constitution of his laws and government, is become *a part of their duty*, which cannot be done without previous relishes of the sweetness and goodness

[1] Prov. xiv. 14. [2] Isa. iii. 10. [3] Ps. xix. 11.

of their *other duty*. They are required "in every thing to give thanks;"[1] and it is said, they shall go on in their way, as "the redeemed of the Lord, with everlasting joy upon their head;"[2] that "they shall sing in the ways of the Lord:"[3] which cannot be, if they take not notice that "the ways of the Lord are pleasantness, and all his paths peace."[4] Therefore you should designedly set yourself to taste the goodness and delightfulness of holy walking. And to that end, when you find the blessed cherishing warmth and vigour of God's gracious communication let in upon you, enlarging your hearts, making your way and work easy to you, and helping you to do with an untoilsome facility what he requires and calls for and "to run the way of his commandments,"—so that you can do acts of piety, righteousness, and mercy, as natural acts, borne up by the power of a steady, living principle acting in you, as it is said, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew strength, and mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, and walk without fainting;"[5]—you should now reflect and take notice how good and pleasant is this! Make your pauses and deliberate; have your seasons of respiration and drawing breath; and then bethink yourself, commune thus with your own heart: 'How do I now like the way and service of the Lord and a life of pure devotedness to him?—a course of regular walking in thorough subjection to his laws and government, and that the course of my actions be as a continual sacrificing,—doing all to him and for him?' What! do you not now rejoice that you find yourselves to "offer willingly?" Can you forbear with gratitude and joy to acknowledge and own it to him, that it is "of his own hand that you do" this? You should now compare your present with your former state and temper, and consider, 'How much better is it to me to live in his fear, love, and communion, than to be, as once I was, alienated from the life of God, and as without him in the world! Now I can trust and obey; once I could not. Now,

[1] 1 Thess. v. 18. [2] Isa. li. 11. [3] Ps. cxxxviii. 5.
[4] Prov. iii. 17. [5] Isa. xl. 31.

when the opportunity invites, I am in some readiness to serve him, "created to good works, a vessel fitted to my Master's use;" sometime I was "to every good work reprobate."' Surely it is most becoming to take a free complacency in this blessed change:—that is, not with a proud, pharisaical gloriation to say, "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men;" or, trusting in yourself that you are righteous, to despise others; but with a mean estimation of yourself and all you can do, and with that deep and constant sense, that when you have done all you can, you "are an unprofitable servant,"—you do but your duty;—yet blessing God, that since he hath made such things your duty, he also doth in some measure enable you to do it; that he hath reconciled and attempered your heart to your way and work, and made it pleasant to you;—not hypocritically arrogating all to yourself under the formal and false show of thanksgiving to him, or aiming only more colourably to introduce a vain boast and ostentation of yourself in the form of gratulation to God; but as having a heart inwardly possessed with the humble sense *who it is* that hath made you differ, not only from other men, but from yourself also.

(8.) And because that disposedness of heart unto such a course of holy practice may not be constantly actual and equally sensible at all times,—that all delight in the ways of God may not hereupon cease and be broken off, which in those sadder intervals cannot but suffer a great diminution, you must take heed, that, as to the distempers and indispositions you now discern in your own spirit, you do neither *indulge yourself* nor *despair*, but take the proper course of redress.

To indulge yourself in them were mortal. Then down you go as a dead weight into the mire and dirt, into the depths of the earth, and your swift and pleasant flight ends in a heavy, lumpish fall. You should therefore bethink yourself, that if you yield to a slothful, sluggish temper of spirit, which you now feel coming on upon you, shortly you shall have nothing sensibly remaining to you of your religion, but

the dead and empty form. How waste and desolate a thing will that be!—a like thing as if you come into a deserted house where you were wont pleasantly to converse with most delectable friends, and you now find nothing but cold, bare walls. How dismal will it be when only the same duties, the same external frame and acts of worship remain, but the spirit of life and power which was wont to breathe in them, is retired and gone! And what! will you take up with that delusive, unconversable shadow, or be content to embrace the stiff and breathless carcase that remains? You find, perhaps, your spirit sinking into carnality,—an earthly temper of mind gradually seizing on you,—worldly thoughts, cares, desires, fears, invading your heart: by the same degrees that these come on, life retires; you grow listless toward God; your heart is not in your religion as heretofore; you keep up your fashion of praying and doing other duties which were your former wont; but you languish in them. Can you here be content to lie still and die? and rather choose to suffer the pains of death than of labour, by which your soul might yet live? Is this a time to roll yourself upon your slothful bed and say, "Soul, take thine ease," even upon the pit's brink? Do not agree the matter so. Think not of making a covenant with death; it is not so gentle a thing as your slothful temper makes you think. Account the state intolerable wherein you are so manifestly tending *towards it*. Think not well of yourself and your present case. What reason soever any have to be pleased and delighted with a course of lively converse with God and "of walking in the Spirit," so much reason you have to be displeased with yourself as your case now is,—to dislike and abhor the present temper of your own soul. If the life of religion and its vigorous exercises be delightful, by that very reason, it appears, its faint and sickly languishings are not so.

Therefore know that self-indulgence is now most unsuitable and dangerous. Labour to awaken in yourselves some sense of your condition. Think, 'Whither am I going?' Represent to your own soul the terrors of death. Admit the

impression thereof. Behold its frightful visage, and be startled at it. Recount with yourself what you shall be if God, who is your life, quite depart: if this shall never be, yet know that your fear lest it should is the means of your preservation. And let the apprehension of the tendency of your distemper excite in you that just and seasonable fear. How sure soever you are of the principle that God will never utterly forsake those that are his, as most certainly he never will, yet you cannot be so sure of your application of it to yourself, as your case stands, but that there will now be room for this fear; therefore let it be entertained.

But though you admit a just and very solicitous fear, *be sure that you exclude not hope.* Though you apprehend your case *dangerous,* look not upon it as *desperate.* Your hope must not be in yourself, but in Him that raises the dead, and calleth "things that are not as though they were;" yea, makes them exist and be. But if you cast away all hope, you yield yourself to perish. This stops your breath; so that even all strugglings for life and the very gaspings of your fainting heart, must immediately cease and end in perfect death. The danger of your case, as bad as it is, calls not for this; nor will the exigency of it comport with it. When once the soul says, "There is no hope," it immediately proceeds to say, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go."[1] Your hope is as necessary to your safety as your fear: "We are saved by hope;"[2] that is, of the end itself, which therefore animates to all the encounters and difficulties of our way as well from within as from without. Great distempers appear in you, and often return; yea, such as are of a threatening aspect and tendency. You should yet consider you are under cure; the prescribed means and method whereof are before you. "There is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there,"—one in whose hands none that trusted him ever miscarried. It is well if you find yourself sick. "The whole need him not," and will not therefore

[1] Jer. ii. 25. [2] Rom. viii. 24.

commit themselves to his care. He hath relieved many such as you, that, apprehending their case, have been restored to him. Let them despair that know no such way of help. Say within yourself, 'Though I am fallen and low, I shall rise and stand, renewed by thee, O my God.' Was there never such a time with you before, when, in the like case, you "cried to the Lord, and he answered you, and strengthened you with strength in your soul?"[1] Say, within yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? . . . hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance," (where health shows itself in lively, sprightly, pleasant looks,) "and my God."[2] And this very hope, as it preserves life, so it doth the delight and pleasure of life, from being quite extinct. The joy of hope is not to go for nothing, when it can only be said, not, 'It is well,' but, 'It shall be.' It is pleasant to consider that the state wherein saints on earth are is a state of recovery; that though it be not a state of perfect health, yet it is not, also, a state of death, but wherein they are tending to life in the perfection of it; and their frequent and very faulty relapses shall be found but to magnify the more the skill and patience of their great Physician. Therefore, however you are not hence to be secure, or imposing upon him, yet let not your hearts sink into an abject despair and sullen discontent, that you find a distempered frame sometimes returning. Let there be tender relentings after God. Your heart ought often to smite you, that you have been no more careful and watchful, but not admit a thought that you will therefore cast off all; that it is in vain ever to strive more, or seek to recover that good frame that you have often found is so soon gone.

Instead of that, apply yourself with so much the more earnestness to the proper course of remedy; and therein you must know your own labour and diligence. Your contentions with yourself must have a great place, otherwise it would never have been said, "Be watchful, and strengthen

[1] Ps. cxxxviii. 3. [2] Ps. xlii. 11.

the things which remain, that are ready to die;"[1] and, "Give all diligence to add to your faith, virtue," etc.[2] Such things would never have been charged as duty upon you if you had nothing to do. You must expect to be dealt with as a sort of creatures capable of understanding your own concernments; not to be hewed and hammered as senseless stones that are ignorant of the artist's intent, but as living ones, to be polished and fitted to the spiritual building by a hand that reasonably expects your own compliance and co-operation to its known design: unto which design, though you must know you are to be subservient, and must do something, yet you must withal consider you can be *but* subservient, and of yourselves alone can do just nothing.

Therefore, if ever you would know what a life of spiritual delight means, *you must constantly strive against all your spiritual distempers that obstruct it, in the power of the Holy Ghost.* And do not think *that* is enjoining you a course wholly out of your power; for though it be true that the power of the Holy Ghost is not naturally yours or at your dispose, yet by gracious vouchsafement and ordination, it is. If it were not so, what means that exhortation, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?"[3] and that, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit?"[4] with the foregoing prescription of "walking in the Spirit, that we might not fulfil the lusts of the flesh?"[5] Doth the Holy Ghost himself prescribe to us impertinently, in order to our obtaining of his own imparted influences? Doth not he know the method and way wherein they are to be conveyed? or, would he deceive us by misrepresenting it? In short, "walking in the Spirit" must signify something; and what can it signify less than *dependence* on his power and *subjection* thereto, with the *continuance* of both these? These, therefore, are necessary to the making of that power our own:—

i. *Dependence and trust:* as that like phrase imports, "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD,"[6] etc.: and that,

[1] Rev. iii. 2. [2] 2 Pet. i. 5. [3] Eph. vi. 10.
[4] Gal. v. 25. [5] Gal. v. 16. [6] Ps. lxxi. 16.

"I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name,"[1] at once shows us both the communication of the Divine power,—"I will strengthen them in the LORD;" and the way wherein it is communicated,—their "walking up and down in his name;" namely, in actual and continued dependence thereon. The blessed God hath settled this connexion between our faith and his own exerted power. As the extraordinary works of the Spirit were not done but upon the exercise of the extraordinary faith which by the Divine constitution was requisite thereunto, so that the infidelity which stood in the privation of this faith did sometimes,—so inviolable had that constitution made that connexion,—in a sort bind up the power of God, ("And he could there do no mighty work, . . . and he marvelled because of their unbelief;"[2] "Why could not we cast him out? . . . Because of your unbelief,"[3])—nor also are the works of the Holy Ghost, that are common upon all sincere Christians, done but upon the intervening exercise of that more common faith.[4] Therefore is this "shield" to be taken above all the other parts of the Divine armature, as sufficient to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;" therefore are we said to be "kept by the power of God through faith."[5] And more expressly in terms to our present purpose,—we are "to receive the promise of the Spirit," that is, the Spirit promised, "through faith."[6] Hereby we draw the power of that almighty Spirit into a consent and co-operation with our spirit: so the great God suffers himself, his own arm and power, to be taken hold of by us. He is engaged when he is trusted; that trust being now in this case not a rash and unwarrantable presuming upon him, but such whereto he hath given the invitation and encouragement himself. So that when we reflect upon the promises wherein the gift of the Spirit is conveyed or wherein the express grant thereof is

[1] Zech. x. 12. [2] Mark vi. 5, 6. [3] Matt. xvii. 19, 20.
[4] Eph. vi. 16. [5] 1 Pet. i. 5. [6] Gal. iii. 14.

folded up,[1] we may say, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."[2]

And then surely he will not frustrate the expectation which he hath himself been the author of. He would never have induced those to trust in him whom he intended to disappoint. That free Spirit, which, as the wind, blows "where it listeth," now permits itself to be brought under bonds, even the bonds of God's own covenant, whereof we now take hold by our faith: so that he will not fail to give forth his influence so far as shall be necessary for the maintaining a resolution in us of stedfast adherence to God and his service, and retaining a dominion over undue inclinations and affections. How express and peremptory are these words, "This I say," (as much as to say, 'I know what I say, I have well weighed the matter and speak not at random,') "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh!" And so much as this affords great matter of rational delight, though more sensible transports (which are not so needful to us, and in reference whereto the Spirit therefore retains its liberty), be not so frequent. Therefore if we aim at the having our spirits placed and settled in the secret of the Divine presence, entertained with the delights of it; if we would know and have the sensible proof of that religion which is all life and power, and consequently *sweetness and pleasure*, —our direct way is *believing on the Spirit.* That very trust is his delight; "He taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy."[3] It is that whereby we give him Divine honour, the homage and acknowledgment proper to a Deity; confessing ourselves impotent and "insufficient to think anything as of ourselves," we rely upon his sustaining hand and own "our sufficiency to be of him."[4] It is his delight to be depended on as a Father by his children. He is pleased that title should be given him, "The Father of spirits;"[5] to have the spirits which are his offspring gathering about him,

[1] Prov. i. 23; Ezek. xxxvi. 27, etc. [2] Ps. cxix. 49. [3] Ps. cxlvii. 11.
[4] 2 Cor. iii. 5. [5] Heb. xii. 9.

—especially those who, being revolted from him and become sensible of their misery by their revolt, do now upon this invitation apply themselves and say, "Lo, now we come to thee, thou art the LORD our GOD,"—craving his renewed communications, drawing vital influences from him, and the breath of life, adoring his boundless fulness, that filleth all in all. And when we thus give him his delight, we shall not long want ours. But then we must also add

ii. *Subjection* to our dependence; a willing, obedient surrender and resignation of ourselves to the conduct and guidance of that blessed Spirit; a dutiful yielding to his dictates, so as that they have actually with us the governing, binding force and power of a law,—"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ,"[1] as it is called. Great care must be taken of "grieving" and "quenching the Spirit," of "rebelling and vexing" it, of "resisting" it,[2] and of "striving against it," (which appears to have been the horrid crime of the old world; his Spirit, it is intimated, had striven, when it is said it should "no longer strive;"[3] and that it had striven implies a counter-striving, that was now, by his penal retirement, permitted to be victorious, but to their own sudden ruin,) of "despiting the Spirit of grace;"[4]—a wickedness aggravated by the very style and title there given it, "The Spirit of *grace*," and unto which only such a vengeance—as is intimated in what follows—which it peculiarly belonged to God himself to inflict, could be proportionable. When we permit ourselves entirely to the government of the Holy Ghost, thereby to have our spirits and ways framed and directed according to his own rules,—his quickening influence and the pleasure and sweet relishes thereof will not be withheld.

And if the experience of some Christians seem not constantly to answer this, who complain they pray often for the Spirit, and desire earnestly its gracious communications, but find little of them, they are concerned seriously to reflect and

[1] Rom. viii. 2. [2] Eph. iv. 30; 1 Thess. v. 19; Isa. lxiii. 10; Acts vii. 51.
[3] Gen. vi. 3. [4] Heb. x. 29.

bethink themselves whether their distrust or disobedience, or both, have not made them desolate. Surely we are altogether faulty in this matter; his promise and faithfulness do not fail, his Spirit is not straitened. But we either do not entirely commit and entrust ourselves to his guidance or we obediently comply not with it; but either indulge our sluggishness and neglect or our contrary inclinations, and resist his dictates, are intractable and wayward, not apt to be led by the Spirit; and hence provoke him to withdraw from us. Hereto we are in justice to impute it that we find so little of that power moving in us, all the motions whereof are accompanied with so much delight.

2. FOR EXCITATION. Little, one would think, should be needful to be said more than only that we would bethink ourselves what all this while we have been directed to, and are, by this text. If that be once understood, hath it not in itself invitation enough? Do we need further to be invited to *a life of delight?* Do we need to be pressed with arguments to choose delightful and wholesome food, rather than gall and wormwood, or even very poison? It is a sad argument of the deplorate state of man, that he should need arguments in such a case! But because, moreover, much is to be said hereafter to persuade unto delighting in God considered in the stricter notion of it, and that will also be applicable to this purpose, therefore little is intended to be said here. Only, it is to be considered, Do you intend to proceed in any course of religion, or no? If not, you are to be remitted to such discourses as prove to you the reasonableness and necessity of it; which if you think nothing you meet with sufficiently proves, think with yourself how well you can prove that there is no God, and that you are no man, but a perishing beast; for these things they are concerned not fondly to presume and wish, but most clearly and surely to demonstrate, who will be of no religion.

But if you think that horrid, and resolve to own something or other of religion, will you here use your understanding and

consider? Is it indeed so horrid a thing to disavow all religion? And what is it better to pretend to it to no purpose? You find the religion is all but show and shadow, mere empty vanity and mockery, which is not delightful. If you will not choose a better because it is delightful, as you are not advised to do for that as *your chief reason*, yet at least choose that which is so, because it is in other more considerable respects eligible, as being most honourable and pleasing to Him that made you, and only safe and profitable to yourself. And what shall your religion serve for, that will not answer these purposes?

And if you be not ashamed to spend so considerable a part of the time of your life, as the exercises of your religion will take up, in doing that, as was said before, whereof you can give no account, yet methinks you should be afraid to make such things the subject of your vanity as do relate to God, either really or in your opinion. Can you find nothing wherein vainly to trifle but the sacred things of the great God of heaven and the eternal concernments of your own soul? and shall the time spent about these matters be peculiarly marked out as your idle time, wherein you shall be doing that only which shall wholly go for loss, and signify nothing? The religion which is not delightful can turn to no better account.

If, therefore, you will have a religion, and you have *any reason* for that resolution, by *the same reason* you would have any, you must have the pleasant, delightful religion we speak of. You have no other choice,—there is no other will serve your turn; and therefore what hath been said to divert you from the other, ought to persuade you to the choice of this. And besides, since there is so much of secret delight in true, substantial religion, that ought not to signify nothing with you. If we did consider the delightfulness of it alone, upon that single account it surely challenges the preference before that which is neither profitable nor delightful. And that it is in itself so delightful, if you had nothing to inform you but the report of such as profess to have tried and found

it so, methinks that at least should provoke you to try also. How sluggish a temper doth it argue, not to be desirous to know the utmost that is in it! It were even a laudable curiosity to resolve upon making trial; to get into the inmost centre of it; to pierce and press onward till you reach the seat of life,—till you have got the secret, and the very heart of religion and your heart do meet and join in one. Did you never try experiments for your pleasure? Try this one. See what you will find in withdrawing yourself from all things else, and becoming entirely devoted to God through the Redeemer,—to live *after his will* and *in his presence*. Try the difference between viewing truths to please your genius or using Divine ordinances to keep up the custom, to conform yourself to those you live among, and help to make a solemn show; and doing these things with a serious design to get into an acquaintance with God, to have your soul transformed into his image, that you may have present and eternal fellowship with him. Try how much better it is to have your lives governed by an awful and dutiful respect to God, than to follow your own wild and enormous inclinations; and whether it be not better, what good things soever you do, to do it for the Lord's sake, than from base and sordid motives.

And why should you be of so mean and abject a spirit, as to content yourself to be held at the door and in the outer courts of religion, when others enter in and taste the rich provisions of God's house? Why will you distinguish yourselves by so debasing a character? It is a just and commendable ambition to be as forward here as the best. Why will you suffer this, and that, and the other man, to enter into the kingdom of God before you,—even that kingdom which consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" Think not so meanly of yourself; impose not on yourself that needless, unwarrantable modesty, as to account you are of a lower rank than all that ever became intimately acquainted with the hidden delights of a godly life. At least you are as capable of being thought worthy as any, for His sake upon whose account all must be accepted. There-

fore think with yourselves, 'Why should I not labour to attain as far in the matter of religion as this or that neighbour of mine? What should hinder? Who restrains or forbids me?'

But you cannot, if you consider, but have somewhat more to assure you of the delightfulness of it than the mere report of others; for your own reason and conscience cannot but so pronounce, if you go to the particulars that have been instanced in. If you acknowledge a God, and consider yourself as a reasonable creature, made by him and depending on him, you cannot but see it is congruous and fit your spirit should be so framed and affected towards him, towards your fellow-creatures of your own order, and all things else that do and shall circumstantiate your present and future state, as hath been in some measure, though very defectively, represented; and that it must needs be very pleasant if it were so. You can frame in your mind an idea of a life transacted according to such rectified inclinations. And when you have done so, do but solemnly appeal to your own judgment whether that were not a very delectable life, and thereupon bethink yourself what your case is, if you cannot actually relish a pleasure in what your own judgment tells you is so highly pleasurable. Methinks you should reflect thus, 'What a monstrous creature am I, that confess that delightful wherein yet I can take no delight! How perverse a nature have I! Surely things are much out of order with me,—I am not what I should be!' And one would think it should be uneasy to you to be as you are, and that your spirit should be restless till you find your temper rectified and that you are in this respect become what you should be.

And will you dream and slumber all your days? How much time have you lost that might have been pleasantly spent in a course of godliness! Do you not aim at a life of eternal delights with God? If you now begin not to live to God, when will you? That life which you reckon shall never end with you, must yet have a beginning. Will you defer till you die your beginning to live? Have you any

hope God will deal in a peculiar way with you from all men, and make the other world the place of your first heart-change? How dismal should it be to you to look in, and still find your heart dead towards God and the things of God, so that you have no delight in them! Think what the beginnings of the Divine life, and the present delights of it, must be the earnest of to you, and make sure the ground betime of so great a hope.

But I forbear here to insist further; and pass on to the discourse of delighting in God under the other more strict notion of it, namely, as the very act of delight hath its direct exercise upon himself.

SECONDLY, So we are to *consider this delight*, not as a thing some way adherent to all other duties of religion, but *as a distinct duty of itself*, that requires a solemn and direct application of ourselves thereunto. For though it seems little to be doubted but there is in this precept a part of religion put for the whole, as having a real influence, and conferring with its name a grateful savour and tincture, upon the whole, it would yet be very unreasonable not to take special notice of that part from whence the entire frame of religion hath its name.

And having shown the nature of this duty already in the former Part, what is now to be said must more directly concern the practice of it; and will, as the case requires, fall into two kinds of discourse; namely, *expostulation* concerning the omission and disuse of such practice, and *invitation* thereunto. And in both these kinds it is requisite we apply ourselves to two sorts of persons: namely, such whose spirits are wholly averse and alien to it; and such as, though not altogether unpractised, are very defective in it and neglect it too much:—

First, Both sorts are to be *expostulated with;* and no doubt the great God hath a just quarrel with mankind (whom these two sorts do comprehend) upon the one or the other of these accounts; wherein it is fit we should plead with men for his sake and their own. And,—

1. With the former sort; them who are *altogether disaffected to God,* alienated and "enemies in their minds through wicked works," and,—excepting such as deny his being, with whom we shall not here concern ourselves,—at the utmost distance from delighting in him. And as to such, our expostulation should aim at their conviction both of *the matter of fact,* that thus the case is with them, and of *the great iniquity and evil of it.*

(1.) It is needful we endeavour to fasten upon such a conviction that this is the state of their case. For while his being is not flatly denied, men think it generally creditable to be professed lovers of God, and reckon it so odious a thing not to be so, that they who are even most deeply guilty are not easily brought to confess enmity to him, but "flatter themselves in their own eyes, till their iniquity be found to be hateful." The difficulty of making such apprehend themselves diseased, that their minds are under the power of this dreadful distemper, that it is not well with spirits in this respect, is the great obstruction to their cure. But I suppose you, to whom I now apply myself, to acknowledge the Bible to be God's word, and that you profess reverence to the truth and authority of that word, and will yield to be tried by it:—

i. Therefore, first, you must be supposed such as believe the account true which that book gives of the common state of man; that it is a state of apostasy from God; that "the Lord looking down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if any did understand and seek God," finds "they are all gone aside,"[1]—that is, that the return may answer to the meaning of the inquiry, gone off from him. "Every one of them is gone back,"[2] or "revolted," as it is expressed in the parallel psalm; "there is none that doeth good, no, not one:"[3] which is quoted by the apostle to the intent that "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."[4] This is then a common case. And as

[1] Ps. xiv. 2, 3. [2] Ps. liii. 3. [3] Rom. iii. 12. [4] Rom. iii. 19.

the same apostle charges it upon the Gentiles that they were "haters of God," so doth our Saviour as expressly on the Jews, who no doubt thought themselves as innocent of this crime as you, that "they had both seen and hated both him and his Father." And when it is said of men, that they were "by nature the children of wrath,"[1]—*they* to whom he writes, "even as others,"—do you think that is spoken of any lovers of God as their present state, or that when all by nature are children of wrath, any are by nature lovers of him, so as to love him and be under his wrath both at once? It is likely, then, that against so plain evidence, while you confess yourselves men, you will not deny you were sometime haters of God. Well then, is the case altered with you? It is a conviction against you that you are of *human race*, till it can be evidenced you are *born from above*, and are become *new creatures*. And what! do you find this? It is not expected you should be able to tell the very moment when you ceased from your enmity against God and became his friends; or give a punctual account of every turn or motion of thoughts in such a change: but it is to be supposed the work was not done upon you in your sleep, so as that you could have no animadversion of what was doing. However, comparing what you sometime were with what you are, what difference do you observe? What! were you sometime haters of God, and are you now come to love and delight in him, without perceiving in yourselves any difference? Bethink yourselves; is not the temper of your spirits just such Godward as it was always wont to be, without any remarkable turn or alteration? That is a shrewd presumption against you that your case is most deplorable. But,—

ii. What is your present temper, in itself considered? You *do love God and delight in him*. How do you make it appear? Wherein doth that friendly and dutiful affection towards him evidence itself? Sure, love and hatred are not all one with you. Whereby would you discern your hatred

[1] Eph. ii. 3.

towards one you did most flatly and peremptorily disaffect? You would dislike the thoughts of him, hate his memory, cast him out of your thoughts. Do you not the same way show your disaffection to God? Do you not find that so a wicked man—his enemy—is branded and distinguished, "God is not in all his thoughts?"[1] Are not they who shall be turned into hell described thus, "The people that forget God?"[2] that is, who willingly and of choice forget him, or from the habitual inclination of their hearts. And is not that your case? What could hinder you to remember him, if you were so disposed?

Yea, but you often forget your friends, or those at least to whom you are sure you bear no ill-will; and what friend would expect to be always in your thoughts? It is answered, But you disrelish not the remembrance of a friend. Do you not the thoughts of God? You do not think on your absent friends while no present occasion occurs to bring them to your remembrance; but is God absent? is he far from any one of us? or have you not daily before your eyes things enough to bring him to mind, while his glorious works surround you, and you "live, move, and have your being in him," and "your breath is in his hand?" Have you that dependence on any friend? Are you under so much obligation to any? You often do not think on friends with whom you have no opportunity to converse;—have you no opportunity to converse with Him? Your friends can lay no such law upon you, to have them much in your thoughts. It argues a depraved inclination, not to do herein what you ought and are bound to do. You cannot by the exercise of your thoughts obtain the presence of a friend; you might a most comfortable Divine presence.

And what though you think not of many to whom you bear no ill-will, nor have any converse with many such; is it enough to bear no ill-will to God? will that suffice you to delighting in him? Are you no more concerned to mind

[1] Ps. x. 4. [2] Ps. ix. 17.

God and converse with him, than with the man you never knew or had to do with? Your unconversableness with God and unmindfulness of him can proceed from nothing but ill-will, who daily offers himself to your converse, who seeks and invites your acquaintance, would have you inwardly know him, and lead your lives with him. Why is it that you do not so, but that you like not to retain him in your knowledge, and that this is the sense and language of your hearts towards him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" It can proceed from nothing but ill-will and a disagreeable temper, that you shun the converse of one that seeks yours; that you will take no notice of one that often offers himself to your view, one that meets you at every turn and aims to draw your eye, and cannot gain a look. When this is your deportment towards God, that he passes by you, and you perceive him not; he compasses you about, behind and before, and is "acquainted with all your ways," and with him and his ways you will have no acquaintance, remain alienated from the life of God and as without him in the world;—is not this downright enmity? or can this deportment agree with *habitual*, and the frequent *actual*, *delight in God* which is required?

Again, would you not be justly taken to disaffect one whose temper is ungrateful, whose disposition and way is unpleasing to you? Is it not thus with you Godward? When you hear of the purity and holiness of his nature, his abhorrency of all wickedness, and how detestable to him everything is that is impure, and that he will not endure it; do not your hearts regret this quality, as we must conceive of it, in the nature of God? which yet, because it is his very nature, doth so much the more certainly infer that a dislike of it cannot but include disaffection to himself, and *that* habitual and constant; since his whole way of dealing with men and the course of his government over the world do, and shall more discernibly, savour of it. Do they not wish him hereupon not to be, in this respect, what he is? which is, in effect, to wish him not to be at all;—the same thing which the "heart of the fool"

says, "No God;" that is, this would please such an one to the very heart. And doth this import no enmity? Can this stand with delight in him?

Are you not disaffected to him, whom, not being able to accuse of falsehood, whom, having the greatest imaginable assurances of the impossibility he should deceive, you will yet by no means be induced to trust? Consider, what doth your trust in God signify more than the sound of the name? Doth it quiet your heart, in reference to any affairs you pretend to commit to him? Doth it purify it, and check your ill inclinations in anything wherein they should be countermanded upon the credit of his word? What doth his testimony concerning the future things you have not seen weigh with you, to the altering of your course and rendering it such as may comport and square with the belief of such things? Would not the word of an ordinary man, premonishing you of any advantage or danger which you have no other knowledge of, be of more value with you? Constant suspicion of any one, without cause or pretence, most certainly argues radicated enmity. You love him not whom you cannot trust.

Do you love him whom upon all occasions you most causelessly displease, whose offence you reckon nothing of? Is that ingenuous towards a friend or dutiful towards a father or a lord? How do you in this carry towards the blessed God? Are you wont to displease yourselves to please him, or cross your own will to do his? Do you take delight in him whom you make no difficulty to vex; whose known, declared pleasure, though you confess him greater, wiser, and more righteous than yourself, you have no more regard to, wherein it crosses your own inclination, than you would have to that of your child, your slave, or a fool? Have you anything to except against that measure and character of loyal affection to your Redeemer and Lord, "If ye love me, keep my commandments"—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"—"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments?" Do you not disobey the

known will of God, in your ordinary practice, without regret? Do you not know it to be his will, that you "strive to enter in at the strait gate;"—that you "seek first the kingdom of heaven;"—that you "keep your heart with all diligence;"—that you "deny yourself, crucify the flesh," be temperate, just, merciful, patient? Do you aim at obeying him in these things? Can you say, 'Lord, for thy sake I refrain the things to which my heart inclines?' Hath his prohibition any restraining force upon your heart? Do you not allow yourself to be licentious, earthly, vain, proud, wrathful, revengeful, though you know it will offend him? And is this your love to him, or delight in him? Do you bear goodwill to him whose reproach and dishonour you are not concerned for, yea, whom you stick not to dishonour and reproach; whose interest among men hath no place in your thoughts; whose friends are none of yours; whose enemies are your friends; whose favour you care not for, nor regret his frowns; whose worship is a burden to you,—that you had rather do anything than pray to him,—and his fellowship an undesired thing? Make an estimate by these things of the temper of your heart towards God; and consider whether it bespeak delight in him, or not rather habitual aversion and enmity.

It may be you will admit these things seem to carry somewhat of conviction with them, but they concern many that are taken for godly persons and lovers of God, as well as they do you; and it may be many such may take themselves for godly persons and lovers of God, and be mistaken as well as you. And what will that mend your cause? If these things will prove a person one that hath no delight in God, they equally prove it as to you and others; which will make nothing to your advantage.

But if they who have sincere love to God are in a degree peccant against the laws of such love,—as that they are, they will hear in due time,—they are more ready to accuse themselves than other men; they abhor themselves that they do not more entirely delight in God, and "repent in dust and

ashes." It better becomes you to imitate their repentance than glory in their sinful weakness; which while they patronize not themselves, you should not think it can afford a valuable patronage unto you. When did you check and contend with your own hearts upon these accounts, as they are wont to do? And if these things, in a degree found with them, prove their delight in God *imperfect*, their prevailing contraries will prove it, however, *sincere*. And if you will not now understand the difference, God grant you may not hereafter at a more costly rate;—between the *imperfection* and the *total want* of his love, between having your heart and soul imperfectly alive towards God, and perfectly dead.

You may further say, *God is out of your sight*, and therefore how can it be expected you should find a sensible delight in him? But is he out of the sight of your minds? If he be, what would you infer? That then you cannot delight in him at all, and therefore that you do not,—the thing that you are charged with all this while. But he is out of sight by the high excellency of his being; for which reason he should be delighted in the more,—that is, with a deeper delight, though not like that you take in the things of sense,—and he hath been so beyond all things, notwithstanding his abode in that light which is inaccessible. This therefore is confession without excuse; and would never be offered as an excuse by any but those that are lost in flesh and sense, have forgot they have reasonable souls, and had rather be numbered with brutes than men;—as if there were not many things you have not seen with the eyes of flesh, more excellent than those you have; or as if you had no other faculty than eyes of flesh to see with! which since you have, and the depravation thereof is vicious and sinful, as your not delighting in God—the matter of fact—seems to be yielded, and so you quit your first post, it will thence appear that it cannot but be sinful too. And since at that you seem to make a stand, as at your next post, either thinking to deny or extenuate the evil of it, our expostulation must follow you thither, and be aimed,—

(2.) To evince to you *the greatness and horridness of that sin.* Suffer yourselves therefore to be reasoned with to this purpose; and consider, first, that you have somewhat of delectation in your natures,—that is, you have the power naturally inherent in you of taking delight in one thing or other. You have such a thing as love about you. Are not some things grateful and agreeable to you, in which you can and do take complacency? Therefore herein an act is not enjoined you which is incompetent to your natures, or simply impossible to you. Next, then, do you not know your delight or love ought to be placed on some good or other that is known to you; and among things that you know to be good, proportionably to the goodness which you find in them, and supremely on the best? Further, do you not acknowledge the blessed God to be the best and most excellent good, as being the first and fountain-good, the fullest and most comprehensive, the purest and altogether unmixed, the most immutable and permanent good? How plain and certain is this! How manifestly impossible is it, if there were not such a good, that otherwise anything else should ever have been good, or been at all! Is not this as sure and evident as anything your senses could inform you of? Whence is the glorious excellency of this great creation, —the beauty, loveliness, pleasantness of any creature? Must not all that and infinitely more, be originally in the great Creator of all? This, if you consider, you cannot but see and own.

While, then, your own hearts tell you you delight not in God, do not your consciences begin to accuse and judge you that you deal not righteously in this matter? And ought it not to fill your souls with horror, when you consider you take no delight in the best and sovereign Good? Yea, when you look into your disaffected hearts and find that you not only do not delight in God, but you cannot,—and not for the want of the natural power, but a right inclination,— should you not with astonishment bethink yourselves, every one for himself, 'What is this that has befallen me? I am convinced this is the best good, every way most worthy of

my highest delight and love, and yet my heart savours it not!' You can have no pretence to say that because your heart is disinclined, therefore you are excused, for you only do not what through an invincible disinclination you apprehend you cannot do. But you should bethink yourself, 'What a wretch am I, that am so ill-inclined!' For is not any one more wicked according as he is more strongly inclined to wickedness, and averse to what is good? But how vincible or invincible your disinclination is, you do not yet know, not having yet made due trial. That you cannot of yourselves overcome it is out of question; but have you tried what help might be got from heaven in the use of God's own prescribed means? If that course bring you in no help, then may you understand how much you have provoked the Lord. For though he hath promised, that for such as turn at his reproof, he will pour out his Spirit to them; yet they who, when he calls, refuse, and when he stretches out his hand regard not, but set at nought all his counsel, etc., may call and not be answered, may seek him early and not find him.[1] And that wickedness may somewhat be estimated by this effect, that thus it makes the Spirit of grace retire,—that free, benign, merciful Spirit, the author of all love, sweetness, and goodness become to a forlorn soul a resolved stranger! If you are so given up, you have first given up yourselves; you have wilfully cast him out of your thoughts and hardened your own hearts against him, who was the spring of your life and being, and in whom is all your hope. And whether this malignity of your hearts shall ever finally be overcome or no,—as you have no cause to despair but it may be overcome, if, apprehending your life to lie upon it, you wait and strive, and pray and cry, as your case requires,—yet do you not see it to be a fearful pitch of malignity, and so much the worse and more vicious by how much it is more hardly overcome?

That we may here be a little more particular, consider,—

[1] Prov. i. 23—28.

i. How *tumultuous* and *disorderly* a thing this your disaffection is. You are here to consider its direct tendency, its natural aptitude; or what it doth of itself and in its own nature, lead and tend to. If *you* may withdraw your delight and love from God, then so may all *other men* as well. Therefore now view the thing itself in the common nature of it: and so, is not aversion to delight in God a manifest contrariety to the order of things,—a turning all upside down,—a shattering and breaking asunder the bond between rational appetite and the First Good,—a disjointing and unhinging of the best and noblest part of God's creation from its station and rest, its proper basis and centre? How fearful a rupture doth it make! how violent and destructive a dislocation! If you could break in pieces the orderly contexture of the whole universe within itself, reduce the frame of nature to utmost confusion, rout all the ranks and orders of creatures, tear asunder the heavens, and dissolve the compacted body of the earth, mingle heaven and earth together, and resolve the world into a mere heap,—you had not done so great a spoil as in breaking the primary and supreme tie and bond between the creature and his Maker, yea, between the Creator of all things and his more noble and excellent creature. All the relations, aptitudes, and inclinations of the creatures to one another, are but inferior and subordinate to those between the creatures and their common Author and Lord; and here the 'corruption of the best' cannot but be 'worst' of all. Again,—

ii. What an *unnatural wickedness* is it,—to hate thy own original! to disaffect the most bountiful Author of thy life and being! What wouldst thou say to it, if thy own son did hate the very sight of thee and abhor thy presence and converse, especially if thou never gave him the least cause? If thou hast been always kind and indulgent, full of paternal affection towards him, wouldst thou not think him a vile miscreant and reckon the earth too good to bear him? But how little, and in how low a capacity, didst thou contribute to his being, in comparison of what the great God did to

thine! How little of natural excellency hast thou above him,—it may be, in many things, besides this unhappy temper, he much excels thee,—when thou knowest in thy Maker is infinite excellency beyond what thou canst pretend unto! And what cause canst thou pretend of disaffection towards him? Many good works hath he done for thee: for which of these dost thou hate him? Whereby hath he ever disobliged thee? With how sweet and gentle allurements hath he sought to win thy heart! And is it not most vilely unnatural that thy spirit should be so sullenly averse to Him who is pleased to be styled "The Father of spirits?" and in which respect it may fitly be said to thee, "Dost thou thus requite the Lord, O foolish creature and unwise? is not he thy Father?"[1] If thou didst hate thy own self, in a sense besides that wherein it is thy duty and in which kind thou hast, as thy case is, a just and dreadful cause of self-abhorrence,—if thou didst hate thy very life and being, and wert laying daily plots of self-destruction,—thou wert not so wickedly unnatural. He is more intimate to thee than thou art to thyself. That natural love which thou owest to thyself and the nature from whence it springs, is of him, and ought to be subordinate to him; and, by a superior law of nature, thy very life, if he actually require it, ought to be sacrificed and laid down for his sake. Thy hatred towards him, therefore, is more prodigiously unnatural than if it were most directly and implacably bent against thyself. And yet, also, in hating him, thou dost most mischievously hate thyself too; and all that thou dost, by the instinct of that vile temper of heart towards him, thou dost it against thy own life and soul. Thou cuttest thyself off from Him who is thy life, and art laying a train for the blowing up of thy eternal hope. "All that hate him, love death."[2] Further,—

iii. It is the most *comprehensive wickedness*, and which entirely contains all other in it. For as the law of love is

[1] Deut. xxxii. 6. [2] Prov. viii. 36.

the universal and summary law, comprehending all duty, and even *as it enjoins* love to God,—for love to men ought to be resolved into that, and must be for his sake,—so must disaffection to God be comprehensive of all sin, whereinto everything of it resolves itself. Dost thou not see, then, how thou cancellest and nullifiest the obligation of all laws while thou hast no delight in God? offerest violence to the very knot and juncture wherein they all meet and are infolded together? Not to delight in God, therefore, what can it be but the very top of rebellion? What will thy sobriety, thy justice, thy charity signify, if thou hadst these to glory in, while thou art habitually disaffected to thy God? Let *men* value thee for these, to whom thereby thou showest some respect; but shall He, who in the meantime knows thou bearest none to him?

iv. It is a most *reproachful, contemptuous wickedness;*—to *Him*, I mean, whom it most directly offends against. Carries it not in it most horrid contumely and indignity to the most high God? It is a practical denial of all those excellencies in him that render and recommend him the most worthy object of our delight; it is more than *saying*, 'He is not good, holy, wise, just, and true.' Things may on the sudden be said that are not deliberately thought, and may be retracted the next breath; but a man's stated, constant course and way signifies the apprehension it proceeds from to be fixed, and that it is the settled, habitual sense of his soul. Yea, and since, as hath been said, 'Thou delightest in other things, whilst thou delightest not in him;' it plainly imports it to be the constant sense of thy very heart that those things are better than he. What is it, then, that hath thy delight and love? Whereon is thy heart set? Commune with thyself. Dost thou not tremble, when thou findest this to be thy very case, that thou mayst truly say, 'I can delight in creatures, but not in God; can take pleasure in my friend, but none in him. I must confess it to be the temper of my heart, that I love my father, mother, son or daughter, more than Christ?' Is it not then to be

concluded from his own express word, that thou art not worthy of him, and canst be none of his disciple?[1] Nay, mayst thou not, moreover, truly say that thou lovest this base, impure earth more than God? that thou takest more delight in thy companions in wickedness,—canst more solace thyself with a drunkard on the ale-bench, with a lascivious wanton, with a profane scoffer at godliness, than with the blessed God? that thou canst allow thyself to riot with the luxurious, and eat and drink with the drunken, and "not only do such things, but take pleasure in them that do them;" yea, and thyself take pleasure to commit iniquity; but in the glorious, holy God thou canst take no pleasure? Then wouldst thou be content to carry the plain sense of thy heart written on thy forehead, and proclaim it to all the world, as thy resolved, practical judgment, that thou accountest thy friends, thy relations, this vile and vanishing world, thy wicked associates, thine own impure lusts, better than God? And dost thou not yet see the horrid vileness of thy own heart in all this? Art thou yet a harmless, innocent creature, an honest, well-meaning man for all this?

Yea, wilt thou not see that thine heart goes against thy conscience all this while? that thou disaffectest him in whom thou knowest thou shouldst delight? that the temper of thy spirit is a continual affront to thy profession, through the perfidious falsehood and vanity whereof thou dost but cover hatred with lying lips? Is not that an odious thing which thou so seekest to hide; and which, though thou art not loth to be guilty of it, thou art so very unwilling should be known? And since thou art so very loth it should be known, how canst thou hold up thy head before that "eye that is as a flame of fire," that "searches thy heart and tries thy reins," that observes thy wayward spirit and sees with how obstinate an aversion thou declinest his acquaintance and converse? Wilt thou stand before the glorious Majesty

[1] Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26.

of heaven and earth, who knows thy disaffected heart, and say it is but a small transgression thou hast been guilty of, in not loving him and making him thy delight? Dost thou think this will pass for a little offence in the solemn judgment of the great day that is drawing on? or will "thy heart endure or thy hands be strong," when "the secrets of all hearts" shall be laid open,—thou shalt stand convicted before his tribunal, in the sight of angels and men, of having borne all thy days a false, disloyal heart, full of malignity and ill-will to thy sovereign Lord, whom thou wast so many ways obliged to serve and cleave to with delight and love?

When the difference shall be visibly put between those that delighted in God and them that never did, and thou shalt be marked out for one of them, that didst in heart depart from him all thy days, and be thereupon abandoned to the society of that horrid, accursed crew in whom only thou didst delight,—surely thou wilt not then say thy transgression was small.

2. But we are also to *expostulate* with another sort, who, though they are *not altogether unacquainted* with this heavenly exercise of delighting in God, *yet too much disuse it*, and apply not themselves to it (as who do?) with that constancy and intension of soul as the matter requires. And these we are to put upon the consideration of such evils as either are included in this neglect or are allied unto it,—and do therefore accompany and aggravate the natural evil of it,—as either causing it or being caused by it. And,—

(1.) Those whom we now intend are to bethink themselves what evil is included in their neglect of this part of holy practice. And you are to judge of the evil of it by its disagreement with such known and usual measures as whereto our practice should be suitable, and which in reason and justice it is to be estimated and censured by; as, for instance, the Divine law, conscience, experience, obligation by kindness, stipulation, relation, profession, tendency of the new nature, dictates of God's Spirit, the course and drift of his design; with all which it will be found to have very ill accord.

i. How directly opposite is it to *the law of God!*—not only to his express written precept, but to that immutable, eternal law which arises from our very natures referred unto his; the obligingness or binding force whereof doth not so much stand in this, that the thing to be done is such as whereto our natures were originally inclined, which yet is of great weight, they having been thus inclined and determined by our Maker himself, so that our inclination was in this case expressive of his will; but,—which is indeed the very reason of *that*, for we must conceive the Divine wisdom in the blessed God to conduct all the determinations of his will,—the natural, unchangeable congruity of the thing itself. And therefore, as to the things whose constant fitness would render them matter of duty to us at all times, it was provided inclinations suitable to them should be planted in our natures from the beginning; but things that were to be matter of duty but for a time, having only a present fitness unto some present juncture or state of affairs, it was sufficient that the Divine pleasure should be signified about them in some way more suitable to their occasional and temporary use, and that might not so certainly extend to all men and times.

That great law of love to God—which comprehends this of delighting in him—is, you may be sure, of that former sort, it being impossible there should be a reasonable creature in being but it will immediately and always be his duty to love God supremely and above all things; yea, *that* you must know is the most fundamental of all such laws. And therefore when, because original impressions were become so obscure and illegible in our natures, it became necessary there should be a new and more express edition of them in God's written word, this is placed in the very front of them, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" which signifies only the having of a God in name, and no more, if it doth not signify loving Him before all other. Wherefore, when our Saviour was to tell which was the first and great commandment, he gives it thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all

thy mind."[1] The thing enjoined by this law is most substantial,—the life and soul of all other duty, and without which all that we can do besides is but mere shadow; for whatsoever we are enjoined to do else, we must understand enjoined to be done out of love to God as the principle whence it must proceed; and, not proceeding thence, the moral goodness of it vanishes as a beam cut off from the sun: for on this—with the other, which is like unto it, and which also hangs upon this—"hang all the law and the prophets." And what! durst thou, who knowest God, or rather art known of him, neglect so great and substantial a duty? This is not like the command of wearing fringe on the borders of the garment, or of not wearing a garment of linen and woollen; wherein, sure, they whom it concerned should have been very undutiful to have disobeyed; but it is the very greatest among the great things of the law,—a duty upon which all duty depends, even for life and breath! Should not this have obtained in thy practice, that ought to run through and animate all the rest? or was it fit it should lie dead and bound up in the habitual principle, and not go forth, or very rarely, into act and exercise? or didst thou do thy duty herein, by being only inclined to do it? or would not the inclination, if it were right, infer (or otherwise is it like to last long without) suitable exercise? Why was *so express a law* neglected?—so often enjoined,—or the practice mentioned with approbation or the neglect of it animadverted upon with abhorrence, in the very terms or in terms evidently enough of the same import,—in the sacred volume.[2] How could you turn over the leaves of that book, and not often meet with such words, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous" —"Rejoice in the Lord"—"And again I say unto you, Rejoice?"[3] etc. Should not so frequent inculcations of the same thing have been answered by the frequency and continuedness of your practice of it? Or was it enough now

[1] Matt. xxii. 37.

[2] Isa. lv. 1—3; Ps. xliv. 8; Job xxvii. 10, xxxiv. 9; Isa. lviii. 14.

[3] Ps. xxxiii. 1, xcvii. 12; Phil. iii. 1, iv. 4.

and then, as it were casually and by chance, to hit upon the doing of what is so momentous a part of your religion and ought to be the business of your life? Ought it not to cut your heart, to find yourself convicted herein of a disobedient omission? and when the great God exacts that stated homage from you,—a frequent, practical, explicit recognition and owning of him as the supreme delight, the great solace, repose, and rest of your souls,—that you have been so little awed with the apprehension of his authority and right in this case? when he hath mercifully chosen to make *that* the matter of his command and claim, wherein your own advantage, satisfaction, and content, doth so entirely consist? That your practice is herein disagreeable to a law, speaks it sinful; that it transgresses so great a law, highly aggravates your sin,—a law so important, upon which so much depends, so express and plain, legible in the very nature of things, and in reference whereto the very excellency of the object would suffice to be a law to you and dictate your duty, if no command had been otherwise given in the case. Surely the neglect of such a law cannot have been without great transgression.

ii. Your *own conscience,* you will acknowledge, ought to be a rule to you, when it manifestly agrees with that former rule, the supreme and royal law. Do you not find yourselves herein to have offended against that? It may be your sleeping conscience did not find yourself to offend, but do you not find yourself to have offended it, now beginning to awake? This is not a doubtful and disputable matter, (perhaps your minding such matters too much hath hindered you in this;)—surely you will not make a scruple of it, a difficult case of conscience, whether you should take the Lord of heaven and earth for your God; whether you should choose him for your portion, seek rest in him, and place upon him your delight and love. And if in so plain a case your conscience hath not expressed itself offended, you have offended against it, in letting it sleep so securely, and not stirring it up to its proper office and work. And know that

sinning against the light of one's own conscience doth not stand only in going against the actual deliberated thoughts which we have had, but also in walking contrary to our habitual knowledge and the thoughts and apprehensions which thence we might and should actually have had. Inadvertency, and disregard of known duty is the most usual way of sinning against conscience. And besides, have you not in this often gone against the repeated checks of your own consciences? Bethink yourselves: have you not in your prayers intermingled frequent confessions of your cold love to God, and that you have taken so little delight in him? And were those only customary forms with you, and words of course? Surely—though it might not be urgently enough—your consciences did at such times accuse you. And let that be a dreadful thing in your eyes, to continue a course which, if you consider, you cannot but condemn. And,—

iii. Ought not *your experience* to have been instructive to you, as it commonly is to men in other matters? Have you not in this neglect run counter to such instruction? By this means you are supposed to have known the sweetness, as by that last mentioned the equity and fitness, of delight in God. Have not those been your best hours wherein you could freely solace yourselves in him?—was not one of them better than a thousand otherwise spent? Did you never find it good for you, in this way, "to draw near to God;"[1] and hereupon pronounce them "blessed whom he did choose, and cause to approach unto him?"[2] And "where is that blessedness of which ye spake?" Have ye forgotten that ye ever thus tasted how gracious the Lord was? And it is like you have by your taste found it also an evil thing and bitter to depart from him. Methinks you should reckon it a great increase of your sin, to have gone against your own sense, when especially your superior rule might give you assurance it did not deceive you. And doth it not expressly oblige you

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 28. [2] Ps. lxv. 4.

to follow its guidance, while it puts the character of perfect, or of being come to full age, upon them "who by reason of use" (or "accustomedness") "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil?"[1]

iv. And what will you say to the *great obligations* which the love and kindness of God have laid upon you? Will you not esteem yourselves to have been thereby bound to place your love and delight on him? Could you decline doing so without putting a slight upon his love, who is Infinite in what he is, and who is Love? Was not his love enough to deserve yours?—the love of a God, that of a silly worm? Were you not obliged to love him back again, who was so much beforehand with you in the matter of love; "to love him who had loved you first?"[2] The first love is *therefore* perfectly free; the latter is thereby certainly obliged, and become bounden duty. How variously, and with how mighty demonstration, hath that love expressed and evidenced itself! It hath not glanced at you, but rested on you and settled in delight. He hath so stood affected towards the people of his choice, and put a name on them on purpose to signify his delight in them.[3] "He rejoices over them with joy, and rests in his love" to them.[4] "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people."[5] "His delights have from of old been with the sons of men."[6] Could he delight in such as you, and cannot you in him? Be amazed at this! How mean an object had he for his delight!—how glorious and enamouring a one have you,—excellency and love in conjunction! whereas in you were met deformity and ill-will! He hath loved you so as to remit to you much, to give to you and for you a great deal more,—Himself and the Son of his delights. He then (thou shouldst recount) did invite thee to delight in him who hath always sought thy good, done strange things to effect it, takes pleasure in thy prosperity, and exercises loving-kindness towards thee with delight; who contrived thy happiness; wrought out thy peace

[1] Heb. v. 14. [2] 1 John iv. 19. [3] Isa. lxii. 4.
[4] Zeph. iii. 17. [5] Ps. cxlix. 4. [6] Prov. viii. 31.

at the expense of blood, even his own; taught thee the way of life; cared for thee all thy days,—hath supplied thy wants, borne thy burdens, eased thy griefs, wiped thy tears. And if now he say to thee, 'After all this, couldst thou take no pleasure in me?'—will not that confound and shame thee? He hath expressed his love by his so earnest and at last successful endeavours to gain thine:—by this, that he hath seemed to put a value on it, and that he desisted not till in some degree he had won it; whereupon there hath been an acquaintance, a friendship, some intimacies between him and thee according as sovereign Majesty hath vouchsafed to descend, and advance sinful dust. And how disingenuous, unbecoming, and unsuitable to all this, is thy strangeness and distance afterwards! It is more unworthy to cast out of your hearts, than not to have admitted, such a guest.

v. How contrary is this omission to what *by solemn vow and a stipulation* you have bound yourselves to! It hath graciously pleased the blessed God, in his transactions with men, to contrive his laws into *the form of a covenant*, wherein, upon terms, he binds himself to them; expecting—what he obtains from such as become his own—their restipulation. Wonderful grace! that he should article with his creatures and capitulate with the work of his own hands! And whereas his first and great law—and which virtually, being submitted to, comprehends our obedience to all the rest—is, as hath been noted, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" this also he gives forth often, as the sum and abridgment of his covenant, "That he will be our God, and we shall be his people." Now this you have consented to; and therein bound yourselves—as you have heard our Saviour expounds the first and great commandment—to "love him with all your soul," etc. And how well doth your neglect to delight in him agree and consist with this! What! love him with all your soul, in whom you can rarely find yourselves to take any pleasure! Surely your hearts will now misgive, and admit a conviction you have not dealt *truly*, as well as not *kindly*, in this. What! not to keep faith with

the righteous God! To deceive a deceiver, some would think not intolerable; but what pretence can there be for such dealing with the God of Truth? You have vowed to him; what think you of this drawing back? Such trifling with him, the great and terrible God, who keeps covenant and mercy for ever,—how unbecoming is it! To dally with him as you would with an uncertain, whiffling man; to be off and on, to say and unsay, that he shall be your God and that he shall not, (for how is he your God if you delight not in him?)—imports little of that solemn gravity and staidness which becomes a transaction with the most high God. "He takes no pleasure in fools;" wherefore "pay that which thou hast vowed."[1]

vi. Nor doth it better agree with *your relation to him* which arises from your covenant. Thence he becomes yours, and you his: "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine;" and, the covenant binding on both parts, the relation is mutual; so that thereby also he becomes yours. It is a most near—represented, therefore, by the nearest among men, even the conjugal—relation; therefore how full is that Song of Songs, of expressions importing mutual delight suitable thereto! And what a bondage, as well as incongruity, were that relation without delight! Have you repented your choice? If not, why take you not pleasure? why do you not rejoice and glory in it, even as he professes to do over you? If he should repent, in what case were you? Not to take pleasure in God, your own God,—how strangely uncouth is it! You are not to consider him as a stranger, an unrelated one. If he *were* such to you, his own excellencies challenge to be beheld with delight. But you are to reckon and say of him, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend," etc. —"I am his, and he is mine;" and how ill do such words become the mouth that utters them not from the abundance of the heart, even from a heart abounding and overflowing with love and joy!

[1] Eccles. v. 4.

vii. And how doth the temper of your heart and your practice, while you take not actual, ordinary delight in God, clash and jar with *your profession!* For admit you do not then make an express verbal profession of actual delight in God at such times when you find it not, yet you still avow yourselves, and would be accounted and looked upon, as related to him; and the just challenges of that relation are not any way answered, but by a course of ordinary actual delight. So much your profession manifestly imports. Whilst you profess the Lord to be your God, you profess him to be your supreme delight. And how is he so, when you seldom have a delightful thought of him or look to him with any pleasure, and the temper of your spirit towards him is usually strange and shy? And bethink yourselves: what would you then be esteemed? Such as care not for him, as value him not? Would you willingly be taken for such in all those long intervals wherein your actual delight in him is wholly discontinued? Would you not be ashamed the disposition of your heart towards him at such times should be known? Do you not desire to be better thought of? What is there then at the bottom, and under the covert of your yet continued profession at such times, but falsehood? A correspondent affection there is not. Is not your very profession, then, mere dissimulation and a lie,—a concealment and disguise of a heart inwardly bad and naught, but which only comforts itself that it is not known; that is all day long full of earth and vanity, and wholly taken up with either the contentments, delights and hopes, or the cares, fears and discontents, that do naturally arise from these vile, mean objects, and so are of a kind as mean and vile as they; only makes a shift to lie hid all the while, and lurk under the appearance such an one hath put on of a lover of God, and one that above all things delights in him? But is this honest dealing? or was this, indeed, all that was this while to be got of God,—*the credit* of being *thought his?*

Yet it may be you will somewhat relieve yourselves, by saying you suppose for all this your profession was not

altogether false: for you hope there was still a principle in you by which your heart was habitually directed towards God, and whereby his interest did still live and was maintained in you, notwithstanding your many and long diversions from him; and while your profession did signify that, it signified some real thing and so was not a false and lying profession.

But to this I say, Was this all that your profession was in itself apt, and by you designed, to signify? Surely it was apt and intended to signify more than habitual inclination. It carried the appearance of such actings Godward as were suitable to your having him for your God; and you would, it is likely, have been loth it should have been otherwise understood. And surely whatsoever it said or imported more than the truth was false.

And again, Can you be confident that so much as you suppose was true? Are you sure of this, that, because you have sometimes found some motions of heart towards God, it is therefore habitually inclined to him, when it very rarely puts forth itself in any suitable acts and for the most part works quite another way? Whereby are habits to be known, but by the frequency of their acts? Do not you know there are many half-inclinations and workings of heart, with some complacency Godward, that prove abortive and come to nothing; as that *example* of the "stony ground," and that of Heb. vi. 4—6, do more than intimate? Surely your hope and safety more depend upon your repentance, your return and closer adherence to God thereupon, than the supposition your heart is in the main sound and right, amidst those more notable declinings from him.

But we will admit your supposition true,—which the consideration of the persons we are now dealing with, and the design of this present piece of our discourse, requires, —and take it for granted that amidst this your great neglect, you have, notwithstanding, a principle, a new and holy nature in you, whose tendency is Godward; whereupon, we further say, then,—

viii. And doth not your unaccustomedness to this blessed exercise resist *the tendency of that new nature?* And so your practice, while your hearts run a quite contrary course,—for they are not doing nothing while they are not in this delightful way working towards God,—doth not only offend towards your profession, which it in great part belies, but against that vital principle also which is in you; and so your very excuse aggravates your sin. Is there indeed such a principle in you? And whither tends it? Is it not from God? And doth it not then naturally aim at him and tend towards him, being upon both those accounts,—as well as that it resembles him and is his living image,—called a "participation of the Divine nature?" Yea, doth it not tend to delight in him? for it tends to him as the soul's last end and rest. What good principle can you have in you Godward, if you have not love to him? And the property of that is to work towards him by desire, that it may rest in him by delight. Have you faith in God? That works by this love. *Faith* is that great power in the holy soul by which it acts from God as a *principle; love* is that by which it acts towards him as an *end:* by *that* it draws from him; by *this* it moves to him and rests in him. The same holy, gracious nature—dependently on its great author and cause—inclining it both to this motion and rest, and to the former in order to the latter;—so, by the work of the new creature is the soul formed purposely for blessedness in God and devotedness to him; its aspirations, its motions, its very pulse, breathe, tend, and beat this way. But you apply not your souls to delight in God. You bend your minds and hearts another way. What are you doing, then? You are striving against your own life; you are mortifying all good inclinations towards God, stifling and stopping the breath that your panting heart would send forth to him; you are busily crucifying the new creature, instead of the body of sin. There is somewhat in you that would work towards God, and you suffer it not; and is that well? That Divine thing, born of God, of heavenly descent, that hath so

much in it of sacredness by its extraction and parentage, you fear not to do violence to!

If indeed such a thing, as you seem to hope, be in you, at some time or other you may perceive which way it beats and tends. The soul in which it hath place is biassed by it Godward; and though often it is not discernible, it sometimes shows its inclination. Other men, and meaner creatures, sleep sometimes, and then their most rooted dispositions appear not; when they are awake they bewray them, and let them be seen in their actions, motions, and pursuits. The renewed soul hath its sleeping intervals too, and what propensions it hath towards God are little discernible; and yet even then it sometimes dreams of him, at least between sleeping and waking: "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved."[1] But if you seriously commune with yourselves in your more wakeful seasons, you may perceive what your hearts seek and crave; some such sense as this may be read in them: "The desire of our soul is to thy name, O Lord, and to the remembrance of thee."[2] "One thing have I desired, . . . that will I seek after, . . . to behold the beauty" ("the delight," as the word signifies,) "of the LORD."[3] And when you observe this discovered inclination, you may see what it is that in your too wonted course you repress and strive against. That Divine birth calls for suitable nutriment, *more tastes* how gracious the Lord is. You will have it feed upon ashes, upon wind and vanity; or—although it had the best parent, it hath so ill a nurse—when it asks bread, you give it a stone, and let it be stung by a scorpion. And the injury strikes higher than at it alone, even, as is obvious, at the very Author of this Divine production; which therefore we add as a further aggravation of this evil, namely,—

ix. That it is *an offence against the Spirit of grace,* whose dictates are herein slighted and opposed: for surely with the tendencies of the new creature he concurs. It is maintained by him as well as produced,—continually depends on

[1] Cant. v. 2. [2] Isa. xxvi. 8. [3] Ps. xxvii. 4.

him as to its being, properties, and all its operations. Nothing, therefore, can be cross to the inclination of a renewed soul, as such, which is not more principally so to the Holy Ghost himself. And particularly, the disposing of the soul unto delight is most expressly ascribed to him, that very disposition being itself "joy in the Holy Ghost;"[1] and we find it numbered among "the fruits of the Spirit."[2] You may possibly be less apprehensive of your sin in this, because you find him not dictating to you with that discernible majesty, authority, and glory, that you may think agreeable to so great an agent. But you must know he applies himself to us in a way much imitating that of nature. And as in reference to the conservation of our natural beings, we are assured the First Cause co-operates with inferior causes, for "we live, move, and have our being in him,"[3] though the Divine influence is not communicated to this purpose with any sensible glory, or so distinguishably that we can discern what influence is from the superior cause and what from subordinate; our reason and faith certainly assure us of what our sense cannot reach in this matter: so it is here also,—the Divine Spirit accommodates himself very much to the same way of working with our own, and acts us suitably to our own natures. And though by very sensible tokens we cannot always tell which be the motions that proceed from him, yet faith teaches us from his word to ascribe to him whatever spiritual good we find in ourselves, inasmuch as we are not of ourselves sufficient to think a good thought. And if by that word we judge of the various motions that stir in us, we may discern which are good and which not, and so may know what to ascribe to the Spirit, and what not. Whereas, therefore, that word commands us to delight in God, if we find any motion in our hearts tending that way, we are presently to own the finger of God and the touch of his Holy Spirit therein. And what! have you found no such motions excited, no thoughts cast in that have had this aspect and tendency, which your indulged

[1] Rom. xiv. 17. [2] Gal. v. 22. [3] Acts xvii. 28.

carnality and aversion have repressed and counter-wrought? Herein you have grieved and quenched the Spirit.

And if it have not over-borne you into what you should have understood to have been your duty, but have, upon your untractableness, retired and withdrawn from you, do not therefore make the less reckoning of the matter,—but the more rather: this carries more in it of awful consideration to you, and smarter rebuke, *that he desisted.* You must consider him as a free agent, and who "works to will and to do of his good pleasure." His influence is retractable; and when it *is* retracted, you ought in this case to reckon it signifies a resentment of your undutiful and regardless carriage towards him. And ought you not "to smite upon the thigh" then, and say, 'What have I done?' You have striven against the Spirit of the most high God; you have resisted him in the execution of his office when you were committed to his conduct and government; you have fallen out and quarrelled with your merciful guide, and slighted at once both his authority and love. This could be no small offence. And you are also to consider, that when such a province was assigned him in reference to you and such as you, and the great God set his Spirit on work about you, it was with a special end and design, being the determination of most wise counsel. And how highly doth this increase the offence, that,—

x. You have herein directly obstructed the course and progress of *that design, that could be no other than the magnifying of his grace in your conduct to blessedness!* This is that whereon he hath been intent; and he hath made his design herein so visible, that "they that run might read" what it was. The very overture to you of placing your delights on him, speaks its end; it is that whereby he should be most highly acknowledged, and you blessed, both at once. His known design you ought to have reckoned did prescribe to you, and give you a law. It is a part of civility towards even an ordinary man, not to cross his design which I know him earnestly to intend, when it tends no way to my preju-

dice or any man's; yea, to do so would, in common interpretation, besides rudeness, argue ill-nature and a mischievous disposition. Much more would duty and just observance towards a superior, challenge so much as not to counter-work him, and awe a well-tempered spirit into subjection and compliance; but a stiff reluctancy to the great and known design of the blessed God, meant so directly to our own advantage, speaks so very bad a temper, hath in it such a complication of peevish wilfulness, of undutifulness and ingratitude to him, of negligence and disregard of ourselves, that it must want a name to express it.

And now do you see what evil the neglect of delighting in God—accompanied as it cannot but be with the having your hearts otherwise engaged and vainly busy—doth include and carry in it? Will you pause a while and deliberate upon it? Do but make your just and sober estimate by the things that have been mentioned. Measure it by God's law, and it imports manifest disobedience in a matter of highest consequence;—by the judgment of your own conscience, and it imports much boldness against light in a very plain case;—by your experience, and it speaks an uninstructible stupidity or a very heedless, forgetful spirit;—by the obligation laid upon you by the kindness of this very counsel and offer (besides many other ways), and it hath in it great ingratitude and insensibleness of the greatest love;—by your covenant, and it imports treachery;—by your relation, much incongruity and undecency;—by your profession, falsehood and hypocrisy;—by the tendency of the new nature in you, unnatural violence;—by the dictates of God's Spirit, great untractableness;—by his known, declared design in this matter, a most undutiful disrespect to him, with a most wretched carelessness of yourselves as to your nearest and most important concern. One would think it needless to say more. But why should we balk anything that so obviously occurs, tending to set forth the exceeding great sinfulness of this sin? Therefore know that besides its great faultiness in itself,—

(2.) Much also cannot but be derived into it from its very faulty causes. It supposes and argues *great evils* that flow into it, and from which it hath its rise :—

i. Great *blindness and ignorance of God.* For is it possible any should have known and not have loved him, or have beheld his glory and not have been delighted therewith,—and that with *such* delight and love as should have held a settled seat and residence in them? And can your ignorance of God be excusable or innocent? The apostle's words are too applicable: "Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak it to your shame."[1] Do you pretend to him, and know him not? worship him so oft, and worship you know not what? had such opportunity of knowing him, and yet be ignorant? At least it would be thought, "in Judah is God known," and that "his name were great in Israel," where he hath had his "tabernacle and dwelling-place."[2] Here one would think his altar should not bear the same inscription as at Athens, "To the unknown God." How express hath his discovery of himself been to you, and how amiable! What was there in it not delectable, or in respect whereof he hath not appeared altogether lovely,—as it were composed of delights? You have had opportunity to behold him clad with the garments of salvation and praise, and as he is in Christ, in that alluring posture, "reconciling the world unto himself;" wherein *all* his attributes have visibly complied to the reconciling design,—his boundless fulness of life and love not obstructed by any of them from flowing out in rich and liberal communications. If you had not excluded that glorious, pleasant light wherein he is so to be beheld, you would have beheld what had won your hearts fully, and bound them to him in everlasting delight and love. And have you not reason to be ashamed you have not known him better, and to better purpose? "Alienation from the life of God"[3] proceeds from blindness of heart; that is, a chosen, affected, voluntary blindness. Or, if your knowledge of him be not little,—

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 34. [2] Ps. lxxvi. 1, 2. [3] Eph. iv. 18.

ii. Your little delight in him argues *much unmindfulness* of him; at least that you have not minded him duly, and according to what you have known. It might here be seasonable to suggest to you how likely it is that several ways your great faultiness in the matter of thinking of God may have contributed to the withholding of your delight from him. Consider, therefore,—

First, Have not your thoughts of him been *slight* and *transient?* have they not been overly superficial thoughts; casual only, and such as have dropped into your minds as it were by chance; fluid and roving, fixed neither upon him nor into your hearts; too much resembling what is said of the wicked man, "God is not in all his thoughts,"[1]—'He hath not been amidst them?' Your thoughts have not united upon him,—he hath not been situated and centred in them. Was not this the case? You bestowed upon him, it may be, now and then a hasty, passant glance,—the careless cast of a wandering eye; and was this likely to beget an abiding, permanent delight? Have you been wont to compose yourselves designedly and on purpose to think of him, so as your thoughts might be said to have been directed towards him by the desire and inclining bent of your heart;—according to that, "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee?"[2] Whence it is that it is represented as the usual posture of them whom he reckons among his "jewels," and for whom the "book of remembrance was written,"—that "they thought on his name;" a thing that they might be known by, and distinguished from other men.[3] Wherefore it is observable that their remembrance of him was thought worth the remembering, and to be transmitted into records never to be forgotten. The evil of your not delighting in God hath a great accession from your negligent thinking of him.

Secondly, Have not your thoughts of him been *low* and *mean,*—such as have imported light esteem? Compare them with those admiring thoughts, "Who is like unto thee, O

[1] Ps. x. 4. [2] Isa. xxvi. 8. [3] Mal. iii. 16, 17.

LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness?"[1] "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"[2] How unlike have yours been to such thoughts! Bethink yourselves how deeply culpable you have made your neglect to delight in God, by your unworthy thoughts, by which you have detracted so unspeakably from the Divine excellency! Hence you have more to account for than merely not delighting in God;—a rendering him such to yourselves as if he were not worthy to be delighted in! How ought this to shake your hearts!

Thirdly, Have they not been *hard thoughts*,—full of censure, and misjudging of his nature, counsels, ways, and works? Have there not been perverse reasonings, with dislike of his methods of government over men in this present state; as if he had too little kindness for such as you would have him favour, and too much for others;—judging his love and hatred by false measures? This seems to be much the evil unto which the injunction of delight in God is here opposed in this psalm, and whence it may be estimated how directly that militates against this, and, prevailing, excludes it. Perhaps you have delighted so little in God because you have thought, (the thing that is so "wearisome" to him!) "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them;" and have said in your hearts, "Where is the God of judgment?"[3] Or have you not been more peccant in your apprehensions of his rules and resolutions for the disposing of men as to their eternal states? Have you not disbelieved the revelation he hath given of his nature, and express declarations of his mind and purpose touching these matters? Was it not enough for you to have known his gracious propensions towards returning sinners that desire him again for their God, and willingly accept the grace and submit themselves to the conduct and government of his Son? Should not this have allured and won your hearts to him, and made you, with humble, thankful admiration of his grace, resign and yield yourselves to be his for

[1] Exod. xv. 11. [2] Ps. viii. 1. [3] Mal. ii. 17.

ever? Have you not measured your apprehensions of him by the suggestions and misgivings of your guilty, jealous hearts; or by your experienced animosity, and the implacableness of your own spirits towards such as have offended you; as if he could forgive no more than you are disposed to do? Have you not opposed your own imaginations of him to his express testifications of himself, that "He is love; slow to anger, and of great mercy," etc.; and that, "as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts?" Have you not, against his plain word, thought him irreconcilable, and averse to the accepting of any atonement for you; prescribed and set bounds to him, and thought your sin greater than could be forgiven? And if hereupon you have not delighted in him, and have found all ingenuous affection towards him stifled within you,—as your not delighting in him was a foul evil, *so* the more sinful, injurious cause, denying the infinite goodness of his nature and giving the lie to his word, hath made it beyond all expression worse. And further at least consider,—

Fourthly, Have not your *thoughts of God been few?* Is not the meditation of him with you an unwonted thing? The Psalmist, resolving to mind him much, to "praise and sing to him as long as he lived, and while he had any being," doth as it were prophesy to himself that his "meditation of him should be sweet."[1] Frequent right thoughts of God will surely be pleasant, delightful thoughts; but your little delight in God too plainly argues you have minded him but seldom. And how full of guilt is your not delighting in God upon this account! How cheap is the expense of a thought! What! that so much should not be done in order to the delightful rest of your soul in God?

iii. It supposes *much carnality*, a prone inclination and addictedness to this earth and the things of it; and thereupon argues in you a very mean, abject spirit. While you can take no pleasure, or do take so little, in God, is there

[1] Ps. civ. 33, 34.

nothing else wherein you take pleasure? and what is it? God hath in this matter no other rival than this world. It is its "friendship" that is "enmity" to him;[1] something or other of it,—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life,"—prevails far, while "the love of the Father" hath so little place in you.[2] Whither are you sunk,—into how low and vile a temper of spirit,—when you can take pleasure in so base things rather than in the blessed God, and quit so high and pure delights for mire and dirt? What hath thus carnalized your minds, that you savour only the things of the flesh, and Divine things are tasteless and without relish?

Nor are you to think more favourably of your case, if you take little actual complacency in the world also. Probably it is because you have little of it to delight in; it may be you are more acquainted with the cares of it than the delights; or your desire after it is much larger than your possession. It is all one for that. But what are your hearts most apt to delight in, or what is most agreeable to your temper? It is the same thing what earthly affection predominates in you, while the temper of your spirit is earthly, and it is thereby held off from God. Your not having actual earthly delights to put in the balance against heavenly, is only by accident. But all your cares, desires, and hopes of that vile kind, would turn into as vile delights, if you had your wills. In the meantime you are the more excuseless and your sin is the grosser, that even the cares and troubles of this world are of more value with you than delight in God. How far are you from that temper, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."[3]

iv. And how sad an argument is it of *downright aversion* and *disaffectedness to God*, in a great degree at least, yet remaining! Whence can your not delighting in him proceed but from this as its most immediate cause? What could hinder you, if your heart were inclined? Are you not astonished to behold this as the state of your case, that you

[1] Jas. iv. 4. [2] 1 John ii. 15, 16. [3] Ps. lxxiii. 25.

delight not in him because your heart is against it; that is, from flat enmity? And what doth more naturally import enmity to anything than to turn off from it, as not being able to take pleasure in it? So God expresses his detestation of apostates, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."[1] And his contempt of Jeconiah is signified by the like manner of speaking. Do you not tremble to think that this should be the temper of your spirit towards God; and that your estimate of him, as if he were "a despised, broken idol," and as mean a thing as "a vessel wherein is no pleasure?"[2] Reckon, then, thus with yourself: As your case stands, and things do lie between God and you, your little delight in God can have no more favourable account given of it nor be resolved into any gentler or milder cause than enmity.

And if this seem to you not to be a cause, but to be coincident and fall in with it, so much the worse. By how much less this enmity hath of antecedency to your neglect, or the more it seems the same with it, so much the more it discovers the evil of the thing itself; for by what worse name can we call anything than enmity to God? But we speak of your habitual temper, as that which is the cause of your actual neglect. And since you have a discovery of God as the most delectable object—cannot pretend there is a better—have leave and free permission to place your delight on him, yea, are earnestly invited and pressed to it, it is plain nothing else is in your way to hinder you; therefore you delight not in him, because your heart only is averse.

(3.) We also might insist further to show the *evils* that ensue and follow upon this neglect,—such, I mean, as do not follow casually and by accident, but which have a very inward connection with it and are its most natural consequents, being some way caused by it, or which it doth very directly tend to beget.

And yet these we need not be solicitously curious to distinguish, as things of a kind altogether diverse from those last

[1] Heb. x. 38. [2] Jer. xxii. 28.

mentioned under the foregoing head. For it is very apparent the same things may both cause little delight in God, and be caused thereby; as a person may therefore not delight in God because he knows him not, and may therefore be the less apt to entertain the knowledge of him because he hath no delight in him. And the case is the same as to the other things spoken of as causes of this omission; that is, that *it* and *they* may be mutual causes of one another. But it, however, equally serves the design of aggravating the evil of not taking frequent actual delight in God, that hereby sin grows, whether in the same or in different kinds. There is still an increase of sin, though but of the same sort that was in being before.

You ought to consider then; as you take so little delight in God from that very bad cause, that you have not entertained the right knowledge of him when you had so great opportunity to get much of it,—which makes your matter very ill,—do you not also find that, by your withholding yourselves from delighting in him, you have still less disposition to seek his more inward acquaintance? And doth not that make your matter much worse? If you already know somewhat of him, you yet know but in part; your object is infinite, and this knowledge so excellent that you cannot fully attain to it; there is still more to be known.

Now, therefore, if you did delight much in God, would you not be "pressing hard after him?"[1] would you not be "following on to know" him?[2] And then would "his goings forth be prepared before you as the morning," and he would be still visiting you with fresh and increasing light; whereupon your pleasure would be renewed and increased by every fresh view, and consequently your progress would be from sight to sight, and from pleasure to pleasure; whereas now this wheel stands still, or you are going back into darkness and desolation. Have you not much the more to answer for upon this account?

The like may be said as to the rest. The irrectitude and

[1] Ps. lxiii. 8. [2] Hos. vi. 3.

great faultiness of your thoughts of God, though that contribute not a little to your not delighting in him, yet also, if you did delight in him more, would not your thoughts of him be more deeply serious, more highly raised? would you not be very unapt to take up injurious, hard thoughts of him? Would not his thoughts, once become "precious" to you, be also numerous, or innumerable rather, as the sands of the sea-shore?[1] Would not your earthly temper, your strangeness and averseness to him, vanish and wear off, if you were more exercised in actual delightful converses with him? Therefore the permanency and increase of those mentioned evils, and that they have got such settled rooting in you, is all to be charged upon your not applying yourselves to more frequent actual delight in God: besides what may further follow hereupon;—the languishment and decays of your inward man; the difficulty you find to trust in God, when you are reduced to straits (as who would commit his concernments to one he doth not love?); your impatience of adverse and cross emergencies that may often befall to you; your aptness to vexation or despondency; the easy victory a temptation hath over you (as surely he is sooner drawn away from God or into sin against him, who delights not in him); your less usefulness in your place and station; your want of courage, resolution, zeal for God, which are best maintained by delight and the relishes of a sweet complacency taken in him; your sluggishness in a course of well-doing; the sense of a toilsome, heavy labour in religion, that it begets you weariness without rest, whence you rather affect a rest from it than in it and by it; and, lastly, your continual bondage by the fear of death (which one would not dread, apprehending it only a removal into His presence in whom I delight);—all these things (which might have been distinctly insisted on and more expressly accommodated to the present purpose, but that I would not be over-tedious, and that somewhere else some or other of them may fall again in our way,) do bring in great and weighty additions to the evil and guiltiness

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 17, 18.

of this sin, and much tend to lay load upon it, to "fill up its measure," even unto "pressing down and running over." For how just is it to impute to it what it naturally causes, and lay its own impure and viperous births at its own door!

And though this discourse hath been drawn out to a greater length than was intended, it will not be lost labour, if, by all that hath been said, any that fear God shall be brought to apprehend more of the odiousness of this sin; and the self-indulgent thought be banished far from them, that this is either an indifferent matter, or at least,—if it be somewhat a careless,—it is one of their more harmless inadvertencies and omissions;—which good effect, if, through the blessing of God, it may accomplish, there will be the less need unto such to read on, but take their nearer way to the immediate present practice of this great duty. And because also it is to be hoped that the evil of this neglect, once apprehended, will prompt and quicken serious and considering persons to set upon the enjoined duty, it will be the less necessary to enlarge much in that other kind of discourse which we now come to, namely,—

Secondly, Invitation thereunto;—wherein yet we have reason to fear it may be too needful to place some part of our present labour. For though in matters of an infinitely inferior nature and concernment, any practice is readily undertaken that is once represented reasonable and gainful, in such a business as this a hundred difficulties are imagined,—we stand as persons that cannot find their hands; and all the question is,—even if there be some inclination to it, or conviction at least it should be done,—'But how shall we go about it?' We are apt to "grope as in the dark, even at noon-day," and cannot find the door or way that leads into a practice wherein there is so much both of pleasantness and duty. Therefore, as the case is, the *invitation* to this exercise ought, if it were possible, to be a kind of *manuduction;* and it is needful we be not only called and pressed, but even led into it. This, then, we are to endeavour,—the giving

of some plain prescriptions that may put us into an easy and direct way of falling expeditely upon this delightful work.

And here it must be considered, that all, as hath been said, are not in an equal disposition to it. Some are more averse, others less, but all too much; therefore are we to begin as low as their case may require who are less disposed; and so proceeding on in our course, somewhat may fall in more suitable to them who are in some disposition to it, but do yet need (as who do not?) some help and furtherance in order thereto.

1. Therefore it is necessary that you do *deliberately and resolvedly design the thing itself.* Propose to yourselves delighting in God as a business unto which you will, designedly and with stedfast purpose, apply your whole soul. Content not yourselves with light, roving thoughts about it, which many have about divers matters which they never think fit to engage themselves in. Determine the matter fully in your own heart, and say, 'Many projects I have tried in my time, sundry things I have turned my mind unto, to little purpose; I will now see what there is of delight to be found in God.' The sloth and aversion of a backward heart must be overcome by resolution; and that resolution be well weighed, deliberately taken up, deeply fixed, that it may last and overcome. And why should you not be resolved in this point? Is this a matter always to be waived? Know you another way to be happy? Are you yet to learn that a reasonable soul needs the fulness of God to make it happy, and that there is no other God but one? Can there be any dispute or doubt in the case, when there is but one thing to be done beside yielding one's self to be miserable for ever? And what need of that, while yet there is one way to avoid it? Surely that there is but one, is better than if there were a thousand. You need not now be long in choosing; nor do you need to deliberate because of any *doubt* in the case, but that you may more fully comprehend in your own thoughts that there is none, and that your resolution may hereupon

grow the more peremptory, and secure from the danger of any change.

To talk of any difficulty in the matter is a strange impertinency; for who would oppose difficulty to necessity, or allege the thing is hard which *must* be done? Or must it be done, and never be attempted? or attempted, and not be resolved upon? *You* have nothing to do to read further who will not digest this first counsel, and here settle your resolution, 'I will apply myself to a course of delight in God.' If this appear not reasonable to you, despair that anything will that follows. It is foolish trifling to look upon such writings that profess their design and have it in their fronts, that they are meant for helps unto Christian practice, only with a humour of seeing what a man can say. And if ever you will be in earnest, you must return to this point; and will but waste time to no purpose, if you will not now set down your resolution;—that is, that you will seek a happiness for your soul, too long already neglected,—a happiness that may satisfy and last; and where only it is to be found,—in the blessed God; and in him by setting yourselves to delight in him, since nothing can make you happy wherein you delight not; and that you will make use of what you further read, according as you find it conducing and apt to serve your purpose herein. Then next,—

2. Consider *your present state Godward.* Must you, do you see you must, come to this point, of having your delight in God? In what posture, then, are your affairs towards him? How do things stand between him and you? You do well know you were unacceptable to him, and his enemy, and that his justice and holy nature obliged him to hold you as such, though he never gave you ground to think him implacable. Can you delight in an enemy who—as matters in that case stand—must be apprehended ready to avenge himself on you, and as having "whet his glittering sword, and made the arrow ready upon the string," directed against your very heart? Apprehend this to have been your case, and most deservedly; that you were an impure, hateful wretch,

deformed and loathsome, one that could yield the holy God no matter of delight, full of enmity and contrariety to him, and in whom he could not but find much cause of most just hatred. Remember you were one of his revolted creatures, under his most deserved wrath and curse. Know at how vast a distance you were from delighting in him, or a state that could admit of it. Consider, is this still your case? and do not rashly think it altered, or that you have nothing to do but out of hand to rush upon the business of delighting in God.

3. Yet *do not think it unalterable.* Do not conclude it as a determined and undoubted thing, that matters can never be taken up between God and you, or you become suitable and acceptable to him. Look not upon your vile, wicked heart as unalterably wicked; nor upon him, therefore, as an irreconcilable enemy. Account he waits for your turning to him, as being inclined to friendship with you. Otherwise, would vengeance have suffered you so long to live? Have you not been long at his mercy? Hath he not spared you, when it was in his power to crush you at pleasure? Do not think, therefore—what you have no pretence for—that he hath a destructive design upon you, and will accept of no atonement.

4. Acquaint yourself with the *way* and *terms* upon which his gospel *declares him reconcilable;*—that is, that he will never be reconciled to you while you remain wicked; nor for your *own* sake, become you never so good; that a more costly sacrifice than you can either procure or be must expiate your guilt and make your peace. If this matter could have been effected in a less expensive way, the Son of God had not (as you know he was) been designed himself, and made that sacrifice; nor a work have been undertaken by him that might as well have been done by common hands. And since he submitted and undertook as he did, reckon with yourself how highly just it is that the entire honour of so merciful condescension and so great a performance, be wholly ascribed to him. But withal, know he shed his blood, not in kindness

to *your sin*, but to *you*,—and that his design was at once to procure the death of that, and your life; that you need his Spirit as well as his blood,—*that* to recommend and reconcile you to his holiness, as well as *this* to his vindictive justice; that as you expect ever to experience and taste the delights of that communion whereinto he calls you, you must not only have the "blood of Christ to cleanse you from all sin," but must also "walk in the light, as he is in the light;"[1] that an entire resignation, a betrusting and subjecting of yourself to the mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, is necessary to the setting of things right between God and you, in whom only you may both accept God and be accepted of him; that he must be the centre of union between God and you, and that union the ground of all delightful intercourse.

5. Make *request* to him that he would draw you into that *union with his Son*, unto whom none can come but who are drawn by himself.[2] Do not dream and slumber in this business, but know your *all* depends on it. Consider the exigency of your case. Do you find your heart sluggish and indisposed to any such transaction with God and Christ? doth it decline and draw back? Know it herein doth but act its own nature and do as it is, or like, itself. Therefore stir up yourself to "take hold of his strength," in which way, if you have mind to be at peace, you "shall make peace."[3] Cry to him earnestly, 'Draw a poor wretch out of darkness and death, that must otherwise be at eternal distance from Thee, and be miserable for ever. Join me to Him who will bring me to Thee, and make me one for ever with Thee.' Hereupon,—

6. Accepting *Jesus Christ as thy Saviour and thy Lord*, accept in him, with all humble reverence, thankfulness, and admiration of Divine mercy and goodness, *the blessed God to be thy God;* surrendering and yielding up thyself entirely and fully to be his for ever. Do this unfeignedly, and with great solemnity; and let it be to thee for an everlasting

[1] 1 John i. 7. [2] John vi. 44. [3] Isa. xxvii. 5.

memorial. Record it as a memorable day, wherein thou didst go out of thyself, and all finite, narrow, limited good, and pass into union with the eternal, immense, incomprehensible and all-comprehending Good, and enter upon it as thine own. And what! wilt thou delight in a God that is not thine? Canst thou be content to look wistly on him, as one unrelated and a stranger? Apprehend—and bless God that this is the state of the case—that in this way he offers himself most freely to thee. It were astonishing to think of *purchasing* so great a good,—the matter were not to be offered at. But how transporting is it, that nothing but acceptance and resignation should be needful to make thee one with the great God, and make his fulness thine! Therefore make haste to do this, and be not hasty in doing it. Defer not, but do it with great seriousness, deliberation, and fulness of consent; considering you are about to enter into an everlasting covenant, not to be forgotten, and doing a thing never to be again undone.

Now if herein your heart be sincere, and there be a real and vital exercise of your very soul in this transaction with God in Christ, so as that you truly take him for your God, preferring him in your estimation and choice above all things, and giving up yourself absolutely and without reservation to him as his, to be governed and disposed of by him in all things at his pleasure, you are hereby brought into that state that doth admit of delighting in him.

And what remains to be said will concern you as persons in a nearer capacity, and who have a kind of fundamental aptitude and disposedness of heart unto this spiritual work, and will therefore be directed to you considered according to that supposition. Only it is withal to be considered, in the case of many such, that they were arrived hither long ago, and been, as was before supposed, hereupon somewhat exercised and versed in this piece of holy practice,—have had many pleasant turns with God, and tasted often the delights of his converse; but have discontinued their course, and are grown strange to him who was their delight, have suffered

themselves by insensible degrees to be drawn and tempted away from him; or there hath been some grosser and more violent rupture, by which they have broken themselves off. It will be requisite to say somewhat more peculiar to these, for the reducing of them again even to this unitive point. After which, what shall ensue may in common concern them and all that are arrived so far together. For such, therefore, whose case this is, it will surely both become and concern you to take this course:—

1. Make a stand, and bethink yourselves: *Can you justify your carriage towards him whom you have taken to be your God?* can you approve your own way? Was this all that you obliged yourselves unto in the day of your solemn treaty with him, only to take on you the name of a relation to him, and so—excepting that you would now and then compliment him in some piece of external, heartless homage—take leave, till you meet again with him in another world; and that in the meantime, this present world, or your carnal self to be gratified and served out of it, should really be your god, and he only bear the name? Was this indeed your meaning? Or, if it was, did you deal sincerely in that treaty? Or can you think it was his meaning, and that he would expect no more from you? Can you allow yourselves so to interpret his covenant, and give this as the summary account of the tenor of it? How would you then expound it to nothing, and make a mere trifle of it, and make your religion a fitter service for an inanimate, senseless idol, than the living and true God! Do you not yet know what the name of God imports? Can he be a God to you, that is not acknowledged by you as your very best, the universal and absolutely all-comprehending, good? But if you apprehend there was really more in the matter, and that you have been altogether faulty in this thing, then,—

2. Represent to yourselves as fully as you can *the greatness of the fault.* What! have you made God an unnecessary thing to you, while the creature, your very idols, lying vanities, were thought necessary, and these were the things

upon which you thought fit to set your hearts, "which you have loved, which you have served, after which you have walked, which you have sought, and whom you have worshipped?"[1]—the heap of expressions wherewith it seemed meet to the Spirit of God to set out the profuse lavishness of idolatrous affection. Think how monstrous this is! Revolve in your own minds the several aggravations of your sinful neglect before mentioned, and labour to feel the weight of them upon your own spirits. Think what time you have lost from pleasant, delightful walking with God; what damage you have done yourselves; how far you might have attained; how much you are cast behind in your preparations for a blessed eternity; what wrong you have done him, whom you took for the God of your life, to whom you vowed your hearts and souls; how little kindly and truly you have dealt with him!

3. *Return to him with weeping and supplication.* Open yourselves freely to him. Let him hear you bemoaning yourselves; pour out your souls to him in large acknowledgments and confessions of your guiltiness; which, while you keep silence, will consume your bones and waste you to nothing. "Remember whence you are fallen, and repent, and do your first works:" till then, he hath this "against you," that you have "left your first love."[2] And consider, is it not a grievous thing to you, doth it not pain your hearts, that your Lord and Redeemer should have somewhat against you, as it were laid up, noted, and put on record, kept in store, and, as himself remarkably expresses it, "sealed up among his treasures,"[3]—somewhat that sticks with him, and which he bears in mind and hath lying in his heart against you? Is this a small thing with you, when that must be apprehended to be his sense, (and suppose him saying to you,) "'I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals;" and now since those former days, "what iniquity hast thou found in me, that thou art gone far from me, and hast walked after vanity, and art become

[1] Jer. viii. 2. [2] Rev. ii. 4, 5. [3] Deut. xxxii. 34.

vain?"'[1] How confounding a thing were it if he should say, as sometime to others in a case resembling yours, (and why should you not take it as equally belonging to you?) "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!"[2] And while the case admits such sharp and cutting rebuke, and that it is the *matter* of rebuke (not rebuke itself abstracted from the matter,—that is, if it were causeless,) that should smart or wound, how becoming is it, and suitable to the case, to cast down a wounded, bleeding heart before the Lord, and be abased in the dust at the footstool of his mercy-seat! And though your sin be great and heinous,—

4. Yet apprehend *you are before a mercy-seat,*—that "there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared." How would this apprehension promote the humiliation which the case requires! A sullen despondency, that excludes hope of mercy, hardens the heart; continues the sinful, comfortless distance. Therefore apply yourselves to him; seek his pardon in the blood of the Redeemer; know you need it, and that it is only upon such terms to be obtained. Yet also take heed lest any diminishing thoughts of the evil of your sin return, and make you neglect the thing, or waive the known, stated way of remission. We are apt to look upon crimes whereby men are immediately offended, and which therefore are of worse reputation among men, as robbery, murder, etc., as very horrid. This is a matter that lies immediately between Spirit and spirit,—the "God of the spirits of all flesh," and your spirit. You have had a solemn transaction with him, and have dealt falsely. And though the matter were secret between God and you, is it the less evil in itself for that? If you had dealt unworthily, and used base treachery towards a friend, in a matter only known to him and yourself, would you not, when you have reflected, blush to see his face, till matters be composed betwixt you? And is there another way of having them composed, and of restoring delightful, friendly converse, than by your seeking

[1] Jer. ii. 2, 5. [2] Micah vi. 3.

his pardon, and his granting it? Could you have the confidence to put yourself upon conversing with him as at former times, without such a preface; or were it not great immodesty and impudence to offer at it? But that when this hath been the case between the blessed God and you, and you now come with deep resentments, and serious, unfeigned acknowledgments of your most offensive neglects of him, to seek forgiveness at his hand, he should be easy and facile to forgive,—how should this melt you down before him! And this is what his own word obliges you to apprehend and believe of him. These words he hath required to be proclaimed to you: "Return, you backsliding ones, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree;" (your offence hath been idolatry, as well as theirs:). . . . "turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you."[1]

What heart would not break and bleed at this overture? You can be recovered to no capacity of delighting God, as heretofore, till you sensibly feel the need of great forgiveness, and have a disposition of heart inwardly to relish the sweetness and pleasantness of it; till those words do agree with the sense of your hearts, and you can, as in a transport, cry out, "O the blessedness of the man" (as the expression imports) "whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered!"[2] etc. And now, when you are come thus far, if the temper of your spirit be right even in this, there will be, in conjunction with the desire, hope, and value of forgiveness, at least an equal dread of such future strangenesses and breaches between God and you; and that will be very natural to you, which I next add as further advice:—

5. Most earnestly *seek and crave a better and more fixed temper of spirit*, more fully determined and bent Godward; that your heart may be "directed into the love of God;"

[1] Jer. iii. 12—14. [2] Ps. xxxii. 1.

that the "spirit of power, love, and a sound mind," may bear rule in you.[1] Be intent upon the recovery of that healthy soundness which, wheresoever it hath place, will, with a certain steady power, and a strong inclining bent of love, carry your heart toward God. And take heed lest you be satisfied in the expectation and hope of forgiveness as to your former neglects of God, without this.

There is a manifest prejudice daily accruing to the Christian name and profession, by the unequal estimation which that part of the doctrine of Christ hath that concerns the work of his Spirit upon us,—regeneration, the new creature, repentance, and a holy life; in comparison of that which concerns his performances and acquisitions for us,—expiation of sin, satisfaction of Divine justice, forgiveness, and acceptance with God. How sweet, ravishing, transporting doctrines, and how pure gospel, are these latter accounted by many, who esteem the former cold, sapless, unpleasant notions! Thence comes Christian religion to look with so distorted a face and aspect, as if it suffered a convulsion that hath altered and disguised it unto that degree that it is hardly to be known; being made to seem as if it imported only a design to rescue some persons from Divine wrath and justice, without ever giving them that disposition of heart which is necessary both to their serving of God and their blessedness in him. This is not to be imputed so much to the misrepresentation made of it by them whose business it hath been to instruct others,—though of them, too many may have been very faulty in almost suppressing, or insisting less or very little upon, doctrines of the former strain, while the stream of their discourses hath mostly run upon the other,—for it must be acknowledged, that by very many in our age the absolute necessity of the great heart-change hath been both most clearly represented and as urgently pressed as perhaps in most that have gone before. But the matter is plainly to be most attributed to that depravedness of man's nature, whence there is a most unequal and partial reception of the truth of God; and that which

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 5; 2 Tim. i. 7.

seems, taken apart by itself, to import more of indulgence to sinners is readily caught at; that which more directly strikes at the very root of sin is let pass, as if it had never been spoken. And so men make up to themselves a gospel of this tenor and import, that let the temper of their spirits towards God be what it will, if they rely and rest upon the righteousness of Christ, God will be reconciled to them; and they think they need take no further care. But whatever is said in the gospel of Christ besides, of the necessity of being born of God, of partaking a Divine nature, of putting off the old man, and putting on the new, etc., is looked upon as if it had been thrown in by chance, and did signify nothing; and the other, without this, is thought to be pure gospel, as if these were impertinent additions and falsifications! But will not such men understand, that the detracting of anything from the instrument or testament of a man, as well as adding thereto, makes it another thing, and none of his act or deed? and so, that their pure gospel, as they call it, is another gospel, nay, —because there cannot be another,—no gospel? Or will they not understand how simply impossible it is, in the very nature of the thing, that the end should be attained, of bringing men to blessedness,—that is, to a delightful rest in God,—without their having a new nature, a heart inclined and bent toward God, wrought to a conformity and agreement with God's own holy nature and will, unto which the offer and hope of forgiveness by the blood of Christ is designed to win and form them? For can men be happy in him in whom they take no delight; or delight in him to whom the very temper of their spirits is habitually unsuitable and repugnant? How plain are things to them that are not resolved *not to see!*

Wherefore, beware of contenting yourselves with the mere hope, that upon your having admitted a conviction and felt some regret in your spirits for former strangeness to God, you shall be pardoned; so as thereupon never to design a redress, but run on the same course as before; and when you have hereby contracted a new score and the load of your guilt begins to be sensibly heavy upon you, then betake yourselves

to God for a new pardon. What presumptuous trifling is this with the Lord of heaven and earth! And what do you mean by it, or seem to expect? Is it not that God should, instead of remitting your sin to you, remit your duty,—cancel the obligation of that very supreme, universal, fundamental law of nature itself, and excuse you quite from ever loving, delighting in him, or setting your heart upon him at all? Think not forgiveness alone, then, will serve your turn; it will signify as much as a pardon will do to a malefactor just ready to die of a mortal disease. He, poor man! as much needs a skilful physician as a merciful prince;—and so do you: and your matter is nothing the worse, sure, that the person of each is sustained by the same Jesus, and that both parts can be performed by the same hand. And know that a restored rectitude of spirit Godward, a renewed healthiness and soundness of heart, with your actual delighting in God thereupon in your future course, stands in nearer and more immediate connection with your final, perfect, delightful rest and blessedness in him, than your being perpetually forgiven the not doing of it, if this were supposed possible without that. But it is not indeed supposable; for if God would not therefore hereafter banish you his presence, as now he does not, you would for ever banish yourselves, as now you do.

6. Let there be *a solemn recognition and renewal of your engagement and devoting of yourself to God.* Again "take hold of his covenant," and see that it take faster hold of you. Do it as if you had never done it, as if you were now to begin with him; only that your own sin and his grace ought now to appear greater in your eyes,—*that* more odious, that you have added treachery to disaffection; *this* more glorious and admirable, that yet he hath left open to you a door of hope, and that there is place for repentance, and that he is ready to treat with you again on a new score. With what humility, shame, fear and trembling, distrust of yourself, resolution of future more diligent circumspection and observation of your own spirit, trust and dependence on his, ought this transaction now to be managed with the holy God!

And when you are thus returned into the way and course of your duty, then may what follows concern you in common with all others that, being entered, desire direction how to proceed and improve in this holy exercise of delighting in God. Because, therefore, such as have been somewhat practised in this course, and, being convinced of the equity and excellency of it, desire to make progress therein, do yet find a difficulty in it,—it goes not easily with them, they are easily diverted and can hardly hold on in it,—somewhat is intended to be said that possibly may, through the Lord's blessing, be of some use as to that too common case.

1. Then, let it be your great study and endeavour to get *a temper of mind actually, ordinarily, and more entirely spiritual.* We suppose the implantation of some holy and spiritual principles in you already; but that is not enough. For as a mind wholly carnal only savours the things of the flesh, will perpetually withdraw and recoil if you offer it anything tending Godward; so, in whatsoever degree it is carnal, it will do thus in a proportionable degree. If you say, 'Let me now apply myself to some delightful intercourse with God,' while an earthly tincture is fresh with you, and it was some carnal thing that made the last impression upon your spirit, many excuses will be found out;—there will be manifold diversions, it will never be thought seasonable, many other things will be judged necessary to be minded first. Wherefore fence against the addictedness of your hearts to those other things. And whereas, through the great advantages that sensible things have upon your senses and imagination, you are in continual danger to be over-borne and held off from God; this you must earnestly intend, to watch and fortify those inlets, and not to give away your souls to sense and the things of sense. Trust not your senses and their objects to parley, but under strict inspection. Never suffer that they should let in upon you what is suitable and grateful to them at their own pleasure.

You need to have somewhat else than sense, even a spirit of might and power, that may countermand and overrule

in every of those ports, and turn "the battle in the gate." Those use to be the places of most strength, and surely here there needs most. Your case and present state cannot admit that you securely give up yourselves to unmixed, unsolicitous delight, even in the best object. If you intermit care and vigilancy, you will soon have such things come in upon you as will make a worse mixture in your delight than *they* can do, and corrupt and spoil all. Your delight were better to be mixed with holy care than with sinful vanity; *that* tends to preserve, *this* utterly to destroy it. Your state is that of conflict and warfare; you must be content with such spiritual delight as will consist with this state. In a time of war and danger, when a city is beset with a surrounding enemy, and all the inhabitants are to be intent upon common safety, their case will not admit that they should entirely indulge themselves to ease and pleasure. And surely it is better to bear the inconvenience of watching and guarding themselves, and enjoy the comforts which a rational probability of safety by such means will allow them, than merely, with the mad hope of procuring themselves an opportunity and vacancy for freer delights, to throw open their gates, and permit themselves and all their delectable things to the rapine and spoil of a merciless enemy. Understand this to be your case: therefore strictly guard all the avenues of your inward man. It is better to resist *there*, and combat your enemy, than within your walls, who is more easily kept than driven out. *There* cause every occasion and object, even that importunes and pretends business to you, to make a stand, and diligently examine the errand. Let also for this purpose a spirit of wisdom and judgment reside here, (the gate was wont to be the place of counsel and judgment as well as strength,) that may prudently consider what is to be entertained and what not, and determine and do accordingly. But if you will have no rule over your own spirit, but let it be as a "city broken down and without walls,"[1] if you will live careless and at ease, and think in this way to have delight in God; your

[1] Prov. xxv. 28.

delight will soon find other objects, and grow like that of the "swine wallowing in the mire,"—become sensual, impure, and at length turn all to "gall and wormwood."

It may be you have known some, of much pretence to piety, that would allow themselves the liberty of being otherwise very pleasant in their usual conversation; by which you may imagine delight in God—which you cannot suppose such persons unacquainted with—may fairly consist with another sort of delight. Nor indeed is it to be doubted but it may; for the rules and measures which the holy God hath set us import no such rigorous severity nor do confine us to so very narrow bounds, but that there is scope and latitude enough left unto the satisfaction of sober desires and inclinations that are of a meaner kind. He that hath adjoined the inferior faculties we find in ourselves to our natures, and at first created a terrestrial paradise for innocent man, never intended to forbid the gratification of those faculties, nor hath given us any reason to doubt but that the lower delights that are suitable to them might be innocently entertained: nay, and the very rules themselves of temperance and sobriety, which he hath given us for the guiding and governing of sensitive desires, do plainly imply that they are permitted; for that which ought not to be, is not to be regulated, but destroyed. But then, whereas such rules do so limit the inclinations and functions of the low animal life, as that they may be consistent with our end and subservient to it, how perverse and wicked an indulgence to them were it, to oppose them at once both to the authority of Him that set us those rules, and, therein, to our very end itself! That delectation in the things of this lower world which is not by the Divine law forbidden and declared evil, either in itself or by the undue measure, season, or other circumstances thereof, is abundantly sufficient for our entertainment, and the gratification of this grosser part, while we are in this our earthly pilgrimage; and so much can never hurt us, nor hinder our higher delights. God hath fenced and hedged them in for us, as a garden enclosed, by his own rules and laws set about

them; so that we cannot prejudice or impair them but by breaking through his enclosure. Our great care and study, therefore, must be, to repress and mortify all earthly and sensual inclinations, unto that degree as till they be reduced to a conformity and agreement with his rules and measures; unto which they who have no regard, and do yet pretend highly to spirituality and delight in God, it is apparently nothing else but mere hollow pretence;—they only put on a good face and make a fair show, look big and speak "great swelling words of vanity," as they must be called, while their hearts taste nothing of what their tongues utter. Spiritual delight and joy is a severe thing, separated from vain and unbecoming levities, as well as from all earthly impurities, and only grows and flourishes in a soul that is dead to this world, and "alive to God through Jesus Christ."

See then to the usual temper of your spirit, and do not think it enough that you hope the great renewing change did sometime pass upon it, and that therefore your case is good and safe, and you may now take your ease and liberty; but be intent upon this, to get into a confirmed, growing spirituality, and that you may find you are, in your ordinary course, "after the Spirit:" then will you savour "the things of the Spirit,"[1] and then especially will the blessed God himself become your great delight, and your "exceeding joy."[2] Retire yourself from this world, draw off your mind and heart. This is God's great rival. The "friendship of this world is enmity to him;"[3] which is elsewhere said of the "carnal mind,"[4] that is indeed the same thing, namely, a mind that is over-friendly affected towards this world, or not chastely: wherefore also, in that forementioned Scripture, they that are supposed and suspected to have made themselves, in that undue sense, friends of this world, are bespoken under the names of "adulterers and adulteresses." You must cast off all other lovers, if you intend delighting in God. Get up, then, into the higher region, where you may be out of the danger of having your spirit engulphed, and, as it were, sucked up of

[1] Rom. viii. 5. [2] Ps. xliii. 4. [3] Jas. iv. 4. [4] Rom. viii. 7.

the spirit of this world; or of being subject to its debasing, stupifying influence. Bear yourself as the inhabitant of another country. Make this your mark and scope, that the temper of your spirit may be such, that the secret of the Divine presence may become to you as your very element, wherein you can most freely breathe and live and be most at ease, and out of which you may perceive you cannot enjoy yourself; and that whatever tends to withdraw you from him, any extravagant motion, the beginnings of the excursion or the least departing step, may be sensibly painful and grievous to you. And do not look upon it as a hopeless thing you should ever come to this. Some have come to it: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple."[1]

Nor was this a transient fit only with the Psalmist, but we find him frequently speaking the same sense: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."[2] And again we have the like strains: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD. . . . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,"[3] etc. And what was this house more to him than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the Divine presence? So that here was a heart so naturalized to this presence as to affect *an abode in it*, and that he might *lead his life with God*, and dwell with him all his days;—he could not be content with giving a visit now and then.

And why should this temper of spirit, in the clearer light of the gospel, be looked upon as an unattainable thing? A lazy despondency, and the mean conceit that it is modest not to aim so high, starves religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this, then, be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that

[1] Ps. xxvii. 4. [2] Ps. xxiii. 6. [3] Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 4.

you may get into this disposition of spirit towards God. His Spirit will not be restrained, if it be duly sought and dutifully complied with and obeyed; if you carefully reserve yourself for him, as one whom he hath "set apart for himself."[1] If you will be entirely his, and keep your distance, using a holy, chaste reservedness as to other things,—that is, such things as any way tend to indispose your spirit towards him or render it less suitable to his converse,—he will be no stranger to you. And that it may be more suitable and fit for him, you should habituate and accustom yourself to converse in the general with spiritual things. You will be as the things are you converse most with; they will leave their stamp and impress on you;—wandering after vanity, you will become vain; minding earthly things, you will become earthly. Accordingly, being much taken up with spiritual things, you will bear their image, and become spiritual.

Think how unworthy it is, since you have faculties—and those now refined and improved by Divine light and grace—that are capable of being employed about so much higher objects than those of sense, that you should yield to a confinement, in so great part, to so low and mean things; whence it is, that when you should mind things of a higher nature, it is a strange work with you; and those things seem odd and uncouth to you, and are all with you as mere shadow and darkness, that you should be most familiar with. Urge on your spirit; make it enter into the invisible world. May you not be assured, if you will use your understanding, that there are things you never saw, that are unspeakably more excellent and glorious than anything you have seen or than can be seen by eyes of flesh?

Why should your mind and thoughts be limited within the narrow bounds of this sublunary world,—so small and minute, and, by the apostasy and sin of man, so abject and deformed a part of God's creation? Do not bind down your spirit to the consideration and view of the affairs and con-

[1] Ps. iv. 3.

cernments only of this region of sin and wretchedness, where few things fall under your notice that can be a comfortable, or so greatly edifying and instructive a prospect to a serious spirit. But consider that as certainly as you behold with your eyes the wickedness and miseries of this forlorn world that hath forsaken God and is in great part forsaken of him, so certainly there is a vastly greater world than this, of glorious and innocent creatures, that stand in direct and dutiful subordination to their common Maker and Lord; loving, and beloved of him; delighting to do his will, and solacing themselves perpetually in his blessed presence, and in the mutual love, communion, and felicity of one another. Unto which happy number—or "innumerable company," rather, as they are called[1]—the Redeemer is daily adjoining such as he recovers, and translates out of the ruins and desolation of this miserable, accursed part of the universe.

Reckon yourself as some way appertaining to that blessed society. Mind the affairs thereof, as those of your own country, and that properly belong to you. When we are taught to pray, "that the will of God may be done on earth, as it is in heaven," can it be supposed it ought to be a strange thing to our thoughts how affairs go there? Surely faith and holy reason, well used, would furnish us with regular and warrantable notions enough of the state of things above, that we should not need to carry it as persons that have no concern therein; or, when we are required to be as strangers on *earth*, that we should make ourselves such to *heaven* rather. Let your mind be much employed in considering the state of things between God and his creatures. Design a large field for your thoughts to spread themselves in, and you will also find it a fruitful one; let them run backward and forward, and expatiate on every side. Think how all things sprang from God, and among them man, that excellent part of this his lower creation; what he was towards God, and what he is now become. Think of the admirable person, the glorious excellencies, the mighty

[1] Heb. xii. 22.

design, the wonderful achievements and performances, of the Redeemer; and the blessed issue he will bring things to at length. Think of, and study much, the nature, parts, and accomplishments of the new creature; get your mind well instructed and furnished with apprehensions of the whole entire frame of that holy rectitude wherein the image of God upon renewed souls doth consist,—the several lovely ornaments of the "hidden man of the heart," how it is framed and habited when it is as it should be towards God and towards men. Cast about, and you will not want matter of spiritual employment and exercise for your minds and hearts; nor have occasion, if any expostulate with you why you mind this earth and the things of sense so much, to say, you know not what else to think of; you may, sure, find many things else. And if you would use your thoughts to such converse, and thus daily entertain yourself, in this way you may expect a spiritual frame to grow habitual to you; and then would the rest of your business do itself. You would not need to be pressed and persuaded to delight in God, any more than to do the acts of nature,—to eat, and drink, and move, yea, and draw your breath.

2. Endeavour your knowledge, or *the conception you have of God, may be more distinct and clear.* For observe whether, when you would apply yourself to delight in him, this be not the next, or at least one great obstruction after that of an indisposed, carnal heart,—that though you would, and you know it is fit you should do so, you know not how to go about it; for you are at a loss what or how to conceive of him. But is it fit it should be always thus? What! ever learning, and never arrive to this knowledge! It is most true, "we can never search out the Almighty unto perfection;" and it will always be but a little portion we shall know of that glorious, incomprehensible Being: but since there is a knowledge of God we are required to have our souls furnished with, and whereon eternal life depends, with all gracious dispositions of heart towards him, that are the beginnings of that life, certainly the whole compass of our

duty and blessedness is not all laid upon an impossibility; and therefore, if we do not so far know as to love and delight in him above all things else, this must be through our own great default, and more to be imputed to our carelessness and contentedness to be ignorant, than that he is unknowable, or hath so reserved and shut up himself from us that we cannot know him. There are many things belonging to the being of God which we are not concerned to know, and which it would be a vain and bold curiosity to pry into; but what is necessary to direct our practice, and tends to show how we should be and carry ourselves towards him, is not—such hath been his gracious vouchsafement—impossible or difficult to be known. We may apprehend him to be the most excellent Being; and may descend to many particular excellencies, wherein we may easily apprehend him infinitely to surpass all other beings.

For we most certainly know all things were of him; and therefore that whatsoever excellency we can observe in creatures must be eminently and in highest perfection in him, without the want of anything but what doth itself import weakness and imperfection. And hath it not been *his* errand and business into the world, who lay "in his bosom," "to declare him?"[1] And hath not he, "who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person?"[2] He hath been on earth the visible representation of God to men; the Divine glory shone in him, the "glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Was not that Divine?

Suppose we, then, we had seen Christ in the flesh and been the constant observers of his whole conversation on earth, (and though we have not seen it, we have the sufficient records of his life and actions in our hands;) let us, I

[1] John i. 18. [2] Heb. i. 1, 2.

say, suppose him from day to day before our eyes, in all his meek, humble, lovely deportments among men, and withal in the beams of majesty that appeared through that veil wherein he was pleased to inwrap himself;—if we did observe him going to and fro, and everywhere doing good, scattering blessings wherever he went; with what compassion and tenderness he healed the sick, instructed the ignorant, supplied and fed the hungry and necessitous; how he bare with the weak, forgave the injurious (even against his own life), and wept over secure and obstinate sinners; with what mighty power he cast out devils, raised the dead, commanded winds and seas and they obeyed him; with what authority, zeal, and conviction, he contested against a hypocritical generation of hardened, impenitent, unbelieving wretches, casting flames of holy, just displeasure in their faces, and threatening them with the damnation of hell;—and now suppose the veil laid aside, and the lustre of all these excellencies shining forth without the interposition of any obscuring cloud or shadow, and such a one is the blessed God; for this was the express image of his person; and, as he himself tells us, "they that have seen him have seen the Father:"[1] —and do you not now see one to be delighted in?

But yet further: Can you not frame a notion of wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, truth, power, with other known perfections, all concurring together in a Being purely spiritual, (not obvious to our sense,) and that was eternally and originally of himself, the author and original of all things, and who is therefore over all and in all, infinite and unchangeable in all the perfections before-mentioned? Surely such conceptions are not impossible to you? And this is he in whom you are to delight.

Lift up then your minds above your senses and all sensible things; use your understandings, whereby you are distinguished from brute creatures. Consider, this is he from whom you and all things sprang, and in whom your life is. Do you perceive life, wisdom, power, love, in other things?

[1] John xiv. 9.

These must all have some or other fountain. Other things have not these of themselves, for *they* are not of themselves; therefore they must derive and partake them from him; and thence it is evident they must be in him in their highest excellency. Of this, your understandings, duly exercised, will render you as sure as if you saw that infinite glory in which all these meet, with your eyes; and will assure you, it is so much more excellent and glorious, for that it cannot be seen with your eyes. You see the external acts and expressions of these things from such creatures as you are. But life, wisdom, power, love, themselves, are invisible things, which in themselves you cannot see; yet you are not the less certain that there are such things. And do you not find that the certain evidence you have that these things meet in this or that creature, do render it lovely and delightful in your eyes; especially if you have, or apprehend you may have, nearest interest in such a creature? The blessed God not only hath these things in himself, but is these very things himself; therefore must be invisible, as they are. And because he not only hath them, but *is* them, therefore they are in him perfectly, unchangeably, and eternally, as being his very essence. Think, then, of a Being that is pure, original, substantial *life, wisdom, power, love;* and how infinitely amiable and delectable should that ever-blessed Being be unto you!

Converse with the word of God. Read his descriptions of himself; and do not content yourselves to have the words and expressions before your eyes or in your mouths, that represent to you his nature and attributes; but make your pauses, and consider the things themselves signified by them;—that is, when you read such passages of his own holy Book as that which tells you his name, that he is "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious," etc.; or that tell you he is "light," he is "love," he is "God only wise," he is the "Almighty," "God all-sufficient," he is "all in all," and that the "heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain" him; or wherein you find him admired as "glorious in holiness;" or

that say he "is what he is," that he is "the first and the last," "the Alpha and Omega," etc.; labour to fix the apprehension and true import of all such expressions deep in your mind, that you may have an entire and well-formed representation of him before you, unto which you may upon all occasions have recourse, and not be at a loss every time you are to apply yourselves to any converse with him, what or how to conceive of him.

And because mere words, though they may furnish you with a more full and comprehensive notion of him, yet it may be not with so lively a one, or that you find so powerfully striking your heart; compare, with that account his word gives you of him, the works which your eyes may daily behold and which you are assured were wrought and done by him. To read or hear of his wisdom, power, goodness, etc., and then to have the visible effects within your constant view, that so fully correspond to what his word hath said of him, and demonstrate him to be what you were told he is,—how mighty a confirmation doth this carry with it! You may behold somewhat of him in every creature. All his works do not only represent, but even praise and commend him to you.

Above all, since he is only to be seen in his own light, pray earnestly and continually to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that he would give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."[1] From such as so desire to know him he will not conceal himself. This is your more direct "following on to know the LORD;" in which case he hath said, you "shall know," and that his "going forth shall be prepared as the morning."[2] By your craving looks and the expecting posture of your waiting eye, you draw forth and invite his enlightening communications, which do but wait for an invitation. For it is most reasonable you should feel your want and express your desire of what is so precious, before you find it. Hereby you put yourselves amidst the glorious beams of his vital,

[1] Eph. i. 17. [2] Hos. vi. 3.

pleasant light; or do open your souls to admit and let it in upon you;—who, when he finds it is with you a desired thing and longed for, takes more pleasure in imparting, than you can pains in seeking or pleasure in receiving it.

Nor yet, when you have thus attained to some competent measure of the knowledge of God, are you to satisfy yourselves that now you are not altogether ignorant; but,—

3. Employ your knowledge *in frequent and solemn thinking on him;* which is one, and the next end of that knowledge, and a further great means to your delighting in him. Your knowledge of God signifies little to this purpose or any other, if, as it gives you the advantage of having frequent actual thoughts of him, it be not used to this end. Not having this knowledge, when you would set yourselves seriously to think on God, you are lost in the dark, and know not which way to turn yourselves: and having it, you will be as much strangers to delight in him, if you let your knowledge lie bound up in dead and spiritless notion, and labour not to have it turned into active life and fervent love, by the agitation of your working thoughts. By your musing this fire must be kindled. Do you suppose it possible to delight in God, and not think of him? If God be the solace and joy of your souls, surely it must be God remembered and minded much,—not neglected and forgotten. "My soul," saith the Psalmist, "shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night-watches."[1] And he at the same time says his "meditation of him shall be sweet," when he says he "will be glad in the LORD."[2]

It is not a brutal delight you are here invited to. Even such creatures have their pleasures also; and do need thereto, besides a suitable object, only the help and ministry of their senses. Your delight in God can find no way into your hearts, but by the introduction of your exercised minds. There the

[1] Ps. lxiii. 5, 6. [2] Ps. civ. 34.

matter must be prepared and formed by which your delight is to be nourished and maintained. Hereto then you must apply yourselves with design and with serious diligence, and take pains with your recoiling thoughts. Do not make that fulsome pretence to excuse your slothful neglect, that you cannot command your own thoughts. The thing itself is unquestionably true, and that you "are not of yourselves sufficient to think anything that is good, as of yourselves;" and so you may truly enough say that you cannot think any thought at all without God, or so much as draw a breath. Only, as besides your natural dependence on God for the support of your natural life and being, there must be that course taken and those things done, by which, in an orderly course of providence, you may live; so, for the maintaining of your spiritual life,—which very much stands in delight and joy in God,—you must join a spiritual dependence for that special influence and concurrence which is necessary hereto, with the doing of such things as by God's appointment and prescription are to serve this end. They who complain, therefore, they cannot attain to it, to delight in God, or their delight in him is faint and languishing, while in the meantime they use no endeavour to bend and direct their thoughts towards him, do make as idle a complaint as he that shall say he is in a miserable, starving condition, and nothing nourishes him, who, wanting nothing suitable for him, is so wretchedly slothful that he will be at no pains to prepare, or so much as eat and chew his own necessary food. You may not imagine you *have* all that is needful for the well-governing of your spirits in your own hands and power. Nor ought you therefore to think that what is simply needful is *not to be had.* God is not behindhand with you: he is no such hard taskmaster, as to require brick and allow no straw, but may most righteously say, 'Ye are idle, and do therefore only complain like the sluggard in his bed, whose hands cannot endure to labour.' You dare not deliberately go to God, and tell him you do all you can to fix the thoughts of your hearts on him, and yet it will not be; or that he gives you no help. Though

he can be no way indebted to you but by his own free promise, "he giveth meat to them that fear him, being ever mindful of his covenant;" yea, he doth it for ravens and sparrows; he will not then famish the souls that cry to him and wait on him: "Their heart shall live that seek God." It is becoming and suitable to the state of things between him and you, that he should put you upon seeking, that you may find. Your reasonable nature and faculties,—especially being already rectified in some measure, and enlivened by his grace and Spirit,—do require to be held to such terms. It is natural to you to think; and there is nothing more suitable to the new creature than that you apply and set yourselves to think on him, and that your thoughts be set, and held on work, to inquire and seek him out. Know, therefore, you do not your parts unless you make this more your business. Therefore, to be here more particular,—

i. Solemnly *set yourselves at chosen times to think on God.* Meditation is of itself a distinct duty, and must have a considerable time allowed it among the other exercises of the Christian life. It challenges a just share and part in the time of our lives; and he in whom we are to place our delight is, you know, the prime and chief object of this holy work. Is it reasonable, that he who is our life and our all should never be thought on, but now and then, as it were by chance and on the bye? "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Doth not that imply that it was with the Psalmist a designed thing to meditate on God,—that it was a stated course? Whereas it was become customary and usual to him, his ordinary practice to appoint times for meditating on God, his well-known exercise (which is supposed), he promises himself satisfaction and solace of soul herein. Let your eyes herein, therefore, "prevent the night-watches." Reckon you have neglected one of the most important businesses of the day, if you have omitted this, and that to such omissions you owe your little delight in God. Wherein, therefore, are you to repair yourselves, but by redressing this great neglect?

ii. *Think often of him amidst your other affairs.* Every one as he is called,—be his state or way of living what it will, be he bond or free,—is required therein to "abide" with God.[1] And how is that, but by often thinking of him, as being a great part (and fundamental to all the rest) of what can be meant by this abode? How grateful a mixture would the thoughts of God make with that great variety of other things which we are necessarily to be concerned in while we are in this world! If they be serious and right thoughts, they will be accompanied with some savour and relish of sweetness, and at least tend to keep the heart in a disposition for more delightful, solemn intercourses with God.

It is a sad truth, (than which also nothing is more apparent,) that whatsoever there is either of sinfulness or uncomfortableness in the lives of those who have engaged and devoted themselves to God, doth in greatest part proceed from their neglect to *mind God;*—a thing, if due heed were taken about it, so easy, so little laborious, and the labour whereof—so much as it is—were sure to be recompensed with so unspeakable pleasure. That they are so often lost in darkness, drowned in carnality, buried in earthliness, and overwhelmed with miseries and desolations of spirit, and all this for want of a right employing of their thoughts, is from hence only,—they set their thoughts upon things that tend either to corrupt and deprave their spirits or to disquiet and afflict them.

At this inlet and by the labour of their own thoughts, sins and calamities are brought in upon them as a flood; which very thoughts, if they were placed and exercised aright, would let in God upon them, fill them with his fulness, replenish their souls with his light, grace, and consolations. And how much more easy an exercise were it, to keep their thoughts employed upon one object that is ever full, delectable, and present, than to divide them among many, that either lie remote and out of their power, to be

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 20.

pursued with anxiety, toil, and very often with disappointment; or, being nearer hand, are to be enjoyed, if they be things that have an appearance of good in them, with much danger and damage to their spirits and with little satisfaction; or, if they appear evil, to be endured with pain and sorrow! So that the labour of their thoughts among those many things brings them in torture, when their rest upon God alone would be all pleasure, delight, and joy: here their souls might "dwell at ease,"[1] or, as those words import, "rest" in goodness, even with that quiet repose which men are wont to take by night, (for so the word we read "dwell" peculiarly signifies,) after the weariness which we may suppose to have been contracted by the labour of the foregoing day.

And if no such sweet and pleasant fruit were to be hoped for from the careful government and ordering of our thoughts, is the obligation of God's law in this matter nothing with us? Whom we are bound to fear and love, to trust and obey, above all things,—of him are we not bound so much as to think? And what is loving God with all our mind, so expressly mentioned in that great summary of our duty towards him? or what can it mean, after the required love of all the heart and all the soul, to add so particularly, "and with all thy mind," whenas the mind, we know, is not the seat of love? Surely it cannot, at least, but imply that our thoughts must be much exercised upon God, even by the direction of our love, and that our love must be maintained by thoughts of him; that our minds and hearts must continually correspond and concur to *the loving of God*, and so our whole soul be exercised and set on work therein.

What doth it mean that our youth is challenged to the remembrance of him?[2] What! is our riper age more exempt? Do we as we longer live by him owe him less? Doth it signify nothing with us that, as was hinted formerly, the wicked bear this brand in the Scriptures,—they that "forget God?"[3] that it is a differencing character of his

[1] Ps. xxv. 13. [2] Eccles. xii. 1. [3] Ps. ix. 17.

own people, that they "thought on his name?" Why do we suppose our thoughts exempt from his government or the obligation of his laws? Why should it be reckoned less insolent to say our *thoughts*, than "our tongues, are our own, —who is lord over us?" May we do what we will with our thoughts? Who gave us our thinking power or made us capable of forming a thought? And now, will we assume the confidence to tell God we think on him all that we can? How many idle thoughts in the day might we have exchanged for thoughts of God, and every thought have been to us a spring of pleasure and holy delight in him! Know, then, that if ever you will do anything in this great matter of delighting in God, you must arrest your thoughts for him and engage them in more constant converse with him; and, withal, mix prayers with those thoughts, or let them often be praying, craving thoughts, such as may carry with them annexed desires or wherein your heart may breathe out requests,—such as that, for instance, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul."[1] See they be spiritual thoughts, that carry life in them, and aim to draw more.

But now our thoughts may be conversant about him under very various considerations, and all of them very delightful; and this variety may much increase our delight, while our minds converse with him, now under one notion, then under another. They are apt to tire and grow weary, being long employed the same way, upon the same thing. And it were an injury to the blessed God himself, when he presents himself under various aspects and appearances, so to take notice of any one as to overlook and neglect the rest. Therefore,—

4. Look often to *him according as, absolutely considered, he is in himself the most excellent Being; and as, in reference to his creatures, he is the supreme Author and Lord of all.* There is an unspeakable pleasure to be taken in him so beheld. Too many, while their distrust or their carnality and strange-

[1] Ps. lxxxvi. 4.

ness to God holds them in suspense concerning their own special relation to him, are apt to fancy themselves excused of delighting in him. It belongs not to them, they think, but to some familiar friends and great favourites of his, to whom he expresses special kindness, and on whom he places the marks of his more peculiar good-will. But do you think so to shift and waive the obligation of a universal law upon mankind and all reasonable nature? You are to remember, as hath been said, your delight in God is not to be considered only as your privilege, but as an act of homage to him that made you, and put an intelligent, apprehensive spirit into you, by which you are capable of knowing who made you, and of beholding your Maker's excellency with admiration and delight. And if now you are become guilty and vile, will you run into darkness and hide yourselves from him, or close your eyes, and then say the sun doth not shine, and deny the blessed, glorious God to be what most truly and unchangeably he is? Whatever you are, or have desired he should be towards you, yet do him right. Behold and confess his glorious excellency, every way most worthy to be delighted in. Nor have you rendered yourselves so vile, nor had so much cause of apprehending his displeasure towards you, by anything so much as this,—your not having taken delight in him all this while, and your neglect to take the ways, spoken of before, tending to bring you thereto. If you think you have no special relation to him, do you think you ever shall, if you continue in the temper of your spirits strangers to him, and look upon him as one in whom you are to take no delight? Surely it is your dutiful affection towards him and complacency in him, that must give you ground to hope you are his and he is yours, and therefore the beginnings and first degrees of that complacency and delight must be in you before; being begotten by the view of that excellency which he hath in himself antecedently to his being related to you.

Yea, and if your relation to him were already as sure and evident to you as can be supposed, yet are you to take heed

of confining your delight in him to that consideration of him only, or of making it the chief reason of that your delight; for so your delight in him will be more for your own sakes or upon your own account, than his. Learn to look upon things as they are, and not according to their aspect upon your affairs. Is it not a greater thing that he is God, than that he is yours? It is a purer, a more noble and generous affection to Him you are to aim at, than what is measured only by your private interest. Is that boundless fulness of life, glory, and all perfection, treasured up in the eternal and incomprehensible Being, to be all estimated by the capacity and concerns of a silly worm? That consideration, therefore, being sometimes laid aside, sit down and contemplate God as he is in himself, not disowning, as it is not fit you should, but only waiving the present consideration of any more comfortable relation wherein you may, though most justly, suppose him to stand to you; and see if you cannot take pleasure in this, that he is great and glorious, and to have a Being so every way perfect before your eyes. Try if it will not be pleasant to you to fall down before him, and give him glory; to join your praises and triumphant songs to those of saints and angels; and how much yet also it will add to your satisfaction to behold and acknowledge him exalted above all blessing and praise. How great delight hath been taken in him upon such accounts! In what transports have holy souls been, upon the view and contemplation of his sovereign power and dominion, his wise and righteous government, his large and flowing goodness, that extends in common to all the works of his hands! Labour to imitate the ingenuous and loyal affection of this kind, whereof you find many expressions in the sacred volume. For what hath been matter of delight to saints of old, ought surely still as much to be accounted so. To give instances:—

You sometimes find them in a most complacential adoration of his wonderful wisdom and counsels: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how

unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"[1] And again: "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."[2] "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever,"[3] etc. "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever,"[4] etc. Elsewhere we have them in transports admiring his holiness: "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness?"[5] "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none besides thee; neither is there any rock like our God."[6] And this is recommended and enjoined to his holy ones as the special matter of their joy and praise: "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."[7] At other times we have their magnificent celebrations of his glorious power, and that by way of triumph over the paganish gods: "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold,"[8] etc. "Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power."[9] "Forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come,"[10] etc. This is given out as the song of Moses and the Lamb: "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty,"[11] etc. And how do they magnify his mercy and goodness, both towards his own people and his creatures in general: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"[12] "Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the LORD with harp; sing unto him with the psaltery. . . . The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD."[13] "I will

[1] Rom. xi. 33. [2] Rom. xvi. 27. [3] 1 Tim. i. 17. [4] Jude 25.
[5] Exod. xv. 11. [6] 1 Sam. ii. 2. [7] Ps. xcvii. 12. [8] Ps. cxv. 3, 4.
[9] Ps. xxi. 13. [10] Ps. lxxi. 18. [11] Rev. xv. 3, 4. [12] Ps. xxxi. 19.
[13] Ps. xxxiii. 1, 5.

extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. . . . Men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts. . . . They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The LORD is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works."[1] To insert all that might be mentioned to this purpose, were to transcribe a great part of the Bible. And in what raptures do we often find them in the contemplation of his faithfulness and truth, his justice and righteousness, his eternity, the boundlessness of his presence, the greatness of his works, the extensiveness of his dominion, the perpetuity of his kingdom, the exactness of his government: "Who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?"[2] "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds."[3] "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."[4] "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!"[5] "The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious,"[6] etc. "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."[7]

And his glory in the general,—which results from his several excellencies in conjunction,—how loftily is it often celebrated, with the expression of the most loyal desires that it may be everywhere renowned, and of greatest complacency in as far as it is apprehended so to be: "The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever." "They shall sing in

[1] Ps. cxlv. 1, 6—9. [2] Ps. lxxxix. 8. [3] Ps. xxxvi. 5. [4] Ps. xc. 2. [5] 1 Kings viii. 27. [6] Ps. cxi. 2, 3. [7] Ps. cxlv. 10—13.

the ways of the LORD; for great is the glory of the LORD." "Be thou exalted above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth." "Let them praise the name of the LORD; for his name alone is excellent: his glory is above the earth and heaven."[1] When you read such passages as these,—whether they be eulogies or commendations of him, or doxologies and direct attributions of glory to him,—you are to bethink yourselves with what temper of heart these things were uttered; with how raised and exalted a spirit; what high delight and pleasure was conceived in glorifying God, or in beholding him glorious. How large and unbounded a heart, and how full of his praise, doth still everywhere discover itself in such strains,—when all nations, when all creatures, when everything that hath breath, when heaven and earth, are invited together, to join in the concert and bear a part in his praises! And now eye him under the same notions under which you have seen him so magnified, that in the same way you may have your own heart wrought up to the same pitch and temper towards him. Should it not provoke an emulation, and make you covet to be amidst the throng of loyal and devoted souls, when you see them ascending as if they were all incense; when you behold them dissolving and melting away in delight and love, and ready to expire, even fainting that they can do no more; designing their very last breath shall go forth in the close of a song: "I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being?"[2] How becoming is it to resolve, 'This shall be my aim and ambition, to fly the same, and, if it were possible, a greater height.' Read over such psalms[3] as are more especially designed for the magnifying of God; and when you see what were the things that were most taking to so spiritual and pious hearts, thence receive instruction, and aim to have your hearts alike affected and transported with the same things. Frame the supposition that you are meant, that the invitation is directed to you: "O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let

[1] Ps. civ. 31, cxxxviii. 5, lvii. 5, 11, cxlviii. 13. [2] Ps. civ. 33.
[3] Ps. viii., xlviii., xcv.—xcix., etc.

us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms: for the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods," etc. And think with yourselves, 'Is he not as great as he was? is he not as much our Maker as he was theirs? is it not now as true, that "the Lord reigneth, and is high above all the earth, and exalted far above all gods?"' Now, since these were the considerations upon which so great complacency was taken in him, set the same before your own eyes: and since these were proposed as the matter of so common a joy, and the creation seems designed for a musical instrument of as many strings as there are creatures in heaven and earth, "awake," and make haste to get "your heart fixed," lest "the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, the world, and all that dwell therein;" lest "the sea roar, and the fulness thereof, the floods clap their hands, the fields and the hills be joyful together, and all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord," while you only are silent and unconcerned.

And seriously consider the kind and nature of that joy and delight in God wherewith the hearts of holy men did so exceedingly abound; which is to be collected from the expressed ground and reasons of it, for the most part, wheresoever you have any discovery of that joy itself. This general and principal character may be given of it, that it was a sincerely devout and a loyal joy,—not a mean, narrow, selfish pleasure, a hugging of themselves in this apprehension merely, 'It is well with me;' or, 'I am safe and happy, whatsoever becomes of the world.' This was still the burden of their song, 'The Lord is great, and glorious, and excellent; is exalted and most high over all.' And it is to be observed, that as this was the common and more usual strain and temper of holy souls in the ages whereof the Scriptures give us any account; so were doubts and fears, and troubled thoughts concerning their own interest in God, a great deal less usual and common in those days; so that, in proportion to the other pious and holy exercises of such as were true fearers of God and devoted to him, there is little account

given us of anything of that kind in the sacred writings, and especially in the New Testament of our Lord;—an argument, that such as were sincerely religious were most taken up about the interest of God and Christ in the world, rejoicing either in the observation of its growth and increase, or in the hope and confidence that it shall grow; and that they were much less concerned about their own interest; yea, and that this course did thrive best with them: while they were most intent upon the affairs of their common Lord, their own were well enough provided for.

We cannot hereupon but note, therefore, by the way, how altered a thing religion is now become. Almost the whole business of it, even among them that more seriously mind anything belonging to it, is *a fear of going to hell;* and hence perpetual, endless scruples, doubts, and inquiries about marks and signs, and how to know what is the least degree of that grace which is necessary to their being saved;—as if the intention were to beat down the price to the very lowest, and dodge always, and cheapen heaven to the utmost; it may be feared, as to many, with a design not to aim at anything higher than what is merely necessary to that purpose only, and never to mind being excellent, but only being saved.

And yet also it were well, in a comparative sense, if that itself were minded in good earnest by many that profess beyond the common rate; and that, whereas their own interest is the thing they most mind, it were not their meanest and least considerable interest, even that of their sense and flesh, and secular advantage,—and *that* under the pretence too, (which makes the matter so much the worse,) of much love and zeal Godward, and devotedness to his interest, which they supposed involved and wrapped up wholly with theirs. Whence also all their delight and joy is measured only by the aspect of the world and of public affairs upon them and their private ones; and they are either overwhelmed with sorrow or transported with joy, according as the state of things doth either frown upon or

favour their concernments. In the days when the interest of Christ lay more entirely and undividedly among one sort of men, and more *apparently*, (their contests being less among themselves and chiefly with the infidel world,) and they had for the most part no enemies but those in common of the Christian name and cause, so that any common state of suffering to them was the visible prejudice of that cause and interest,—why, what! did they delight and please themselves in nothing but a warm sun and halcyon seasons? Surely they had matter little enough for that sort of joy. And what! did they therefore dejectedly languish and despond, and give themselves up to sorrow and despair? Nor that neither. Unless they had all had but one neck, and that also perfectly in the enemies' power, it had been an impossible thing to stifle and extinguish their delight and joy; so fully did Christ make it good to them, that "their sorrow should be turned into joy, and their joy should no man take from them:" for even that increased it which aimed at its suppression, and the waters thrown upon their flame became rivers of oil. They had got a secret way of "rejoicing in tribulation, of counting it all joy when they fell into divers temptations," of taking pleasure in reproaches for the sake of Christ, of turning difficulties and hazards into matter of triumph, of "taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and glorying to be counted worthy to suffer anything for so excellent a name; insomuch that though their Head and Lord was in a most ignominious way taken from them, and they left as a despised party of men in the midst of an outrageous world, under the seemingly hopeless profession of addictedness to the interest of a man that died upon a cross among thieves but the other day; and though many of them never saw his face, but had their knowledge of him by report and hearsay,—"yet believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."[1] The matter and ground of their joy was not so uncertain and changeable a thing, nor so light and unsubstantial, as the world's kindness and favour,

[1] 1 Pet. i. 8.

and the smooth face of a serene sky. These were true lovers of Christ, and such as counted him worthy, for whom they should do all that lay in their power, and suffer all which it was in the power of any others to do against them upon his account.

They that rejoice and place their delight in the blessed God himself through Jesus Christ, have for the object of their joy the everlasting "I AM,"—Him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" and whose excellent glory may be clouded indeed, and eclipsed to the world and the eye of sense, but still shines in itself and to the eye of faith, with the same bright and undiminished lustre. That delight will then be continued and permanent and ever springing up in fresh liveliness and vigour, which is taken in this blessed object considered as it is in itself; and that hath place in a soul that acts in a steady, direct course towards that object, without sinister respects or any selfish ones of even the highest kind, otherwise than in that subordination which will be suitable to the vast disproportion and inequality between God's interest and ours;—that is, (looking upon our own external concernments as unworthy to be named in the same day,) that though we reckon what there is delectable in God will make for our eternal advantage, yet to consider that advantage of ours so much less, and to be so much more pleased and satisfied that he is in himself blessed and glorious, as it is in itself a thing more considerable that he be so, than it is what becomes of us or of any creature or of this whole creation. We are not indeed concerned, nor may think it warrantable, to put ourselves upon any such severe and unnatural trials of our love and fidelity to him as to put the question to our own hearts, Could we be content to lie in hell, or be in the state of the damned for ever, for his glory? For it were a most injurious and vile supposition of somewhat inconsistent with his own most blessed nature, and eternal, essential felicity,—for his happiness cannot but be much placed in the benignity of his nature,—to imagine that he ever can be pleased or esteem himself glorified, by the

everlasting miseries of any one that truly loves him. We ought to abhor the mention or imagination of such a thing, as a blasphemy against his infinite goodness—the denial whereof were to deny his Godhead. And it were also an absurd and self-contradicting supposition; for none can be in the state of the damned, but they must be also in a state of extreme enmity to God, and of all wickedness and malignity, arrived and grown up to its highest pitch; which, indeed, is the very horror and inmost centre of hell,—wickedness and eternal misery differing, for the most part, but in degree, as grace and glory do. So that to put ourselves upon this trial of sincerity towards God, were to ask ourselves whether we would be willing to express our sincere love to God by everlasting hatred of him, and the truth of our grace by being as maliciously wicked as the devil and his angels! The expressions of Moses and Paul, so frequently alleged, can be wire-drawn to no such sense. This is no place to discuss the importance of them. But it were certainly most imprudent, whatsoever they import, to seek marks of sincere love to God thence, which may be fetched from so many plain texts of Scripture. But it is out of question, that we may and ought to mind and take complacency in our own blessedness, in a degree inferior and subordinate to that which we take in the glory of the blessed God, without making the sinful and absurd supposition of their inconsistency, or that we can ever be put to choose the absence or privation of the one as a means to the other. And such complacency and delight in God as arises upon such grounds is of the right stamp and kind.

See then that yours be a well-complexioned delight, and such as inwardly partakes of the true nature of religion; that is, that hath in it entire *devotedness to God*, as the very life, soul, spirit of it. And if this be not the thing, but merely self-satisfaction, which you chiefly have in pursuit under the name of delight in God, you beat the air, and do but hunt after a shadow. For there is no such thing as real, solid delight in God anywhere existing, or ever will be, separately

and apart from a supreme love and addictedness of heart to him and his interest, as our chief and utmost end: which temper of spirit towards him must be maintained and improved by our fixed intuition and view of his glorious greatness and absolute excellency and perfection, and the congruity and fitness which we thereupon apprehend, that we and all things, as all are of him, should be wholly to him, that he alone may have the glory.

5. And though you are not to *prefer* the consideration of your own interest in God as a good suitable to you, or to give it the highest place in your delight, yet also you must take heed of neglecting it or of denying it any place at all. For though we may plainly observe, as hath been said, that it was the usual temper of holy men of old to be most taken up in admiring God upon the account of his own excellency and glory in itself considered, and may thence collect *that* to be the genuine right temper of a gracious heart, when it is most itself; yet also it is as evident that they were far from neglecting their own interest in God and that they counted it not a small matter,—yea, that it had, though not the principal, a very great influence upon their delight and joy in him. No one can read the Bible and not have frequent occasion to take notice of this. For how often do we find him spoken of under the names of their "portion," "heritage," etc.; and in what raptures of joy do we often find them upon that account! So the Psalmist considers him, when he says, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."[1] How often do we find them glorying in their relation by covenant, and making their boasts of him as their God: "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength,"[2] etc. You have "my" no less than nine times repeated in the beginning (the first and second verses) of that psalm: "My strength," "my rock," "my fortress," "my deliverer," "my God," etc. And afterwards how glorious a triumph is there raised, and in what exultation do we behold them upon this: "Who is God save the

[1] Ps. xvi. 6. [2] Ps. xviii. 1.

LORD? or who is a rock save our God?" And again, "The LORD liveth, and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." And this was some of the last holy breath uttered by that "anointed one of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel:" "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."[1] With this, how well satisfied and pleased did he expire, and go down to the grave! And the people of God are sometime represented as so taken with this apprehension of their peculiar relation to God, that they cannot be content to know, but they proclaim it; nor was it enough the present age should know, but they must have it told the following generation: "Let mount Zion rejoice. . . . . Mark, ... that ye may tell the generation following: for this God is our God."[2] See their ostentation of him,—"This God!" as much as to say, 'Behold what a God have we! view him well, and take notice how glorious a God he is.' And as they glory in the greatness of the God to whom they were related, so they do in the eternity of the relation: "This God is our God for ever and ever," etc. And how inexpressible was the inward pleasure wherewith we may suppose those words to have been uttered,—"God, even our own God, shall bless us!"[3] How delightful an appropriation! as if it were intended to be said, 'The blessing itself were less significant, it could not have that savour with it, if it were not from our own God.' Not only therefore allow, but urge your spirits thus to look towards God, that you may both delight in him as being in himself the most excellent one, and also as being yours; for know, you are not permitted only, but obliged to eye, accept, and rejoice in him as such. It is his first and great law, and the form of his covenant which he requires you to enter into with him, to take him for your God. Herein to be shy and decline, is to *rebel*. And when he offers himself in all his rich fulness to be your portion and

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. [2] Ps. xlviii. 11—14. [3] Ps. lxvii. 6.

your God, how vile ingratitude were it to neglect and overlook the kindness of the overture! It is his glory to have indigent souls satiating themselves in him, drawing from him their vital breath, living upon him as their all; confessing they cannot live but by his vouchsafed communications. And if you should say you love him, but,—so he be ever glorious in himself,—you care not to be happy; it would sound like a hollow compliment. You are not to deal with a God upon such terms. It becomes you not, nor is suitable to him. It is fit for you to own it to him that he is your life,—that you are a *mere nothing* in yourself, and must seek your all in him. Your song and your prayer must be directed to him as "the God of your life."[1] You do not own him *as God*, except you own and adore him as your all-sufficient good, and that "fulness which filleth all in all." You detract from the glory of his Godhead if you attribute not this to him; and if, accordingly, as one that cannot live without him, you do not seek union with him and join yourself to him, and then rejoice and solace yourself in that blessed conjunction.

And if you be not sure as yet that he is yours, your delighting in him is not therefore to be suspended and delayed till you be; but in the meantime delight in him as willing to become yours. To disbelieve that he is willing, is to give him the lie. It is the great design of his gospel so to represent him to you. See that your hearts do embrace and close with that as a most delightful and lovely representation,—the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth offering himself in all his fulness to be thine! thy portion and thy God for ever! How transporting should this be to you! Nor, if you suspect the sincerity of your own heart towards him,—which is the only thing you can have any pretence to suspect, for it were a blasphemy to his truth and goodness to intimate a suspicious thought of *him*,—may you therefore spend all your time in anxious inquiries or in

[1] Ps. xlii. 8.

looking only upon your own evil heart; but look most, and with a direct and steady eye, towards him. Behold and view well his glory and his love, that by this means your heart may be captivated and more entirely won to him.

This makes delight in God a strange thing in the hearts and practice of many. They find too much cause of complaint concerning their own hearts, that they are disaffected and disinclined Godward. And what is the course they take hereupon? Their religion is nothing but complaint; and all their days are spent in beholding that they are bad, without ever taking the way to become better. They conclude their case to be evil and full of danger because they find they can take no delight in God; and they will take no delight in him because they have that apprehension of the danger of their case; and so their not delighting in God resolves into itself, and they delight not in him because they delight not in him. It is strange the absurdity of this is not more reflected on. And what now is to be done in this case? To rest here, is to be held in a circle of sin and misery all your days; and would signify as if delighting in God were a simple impossibility, or as if not to delight in God were a thing so highly rational as to be its own sufficient self-justification, and that it were reason enough not to delight in him because we do not. There can be no other way to be taken, but to behold him more in that discovery of him which his gospel sets before your eyes; and in that way seek to have your hearts taken with his amiableness and love, and allured to delight in him. And labour in this way to have that delight increased to that degree that it may cease to be a question or doubt with you, 'Do I delight in God or no?' Whence when you reflect and find that you do, then shall you have that additional matter of further delight, that whereas you before took delight in him because being in himself so excellent a one he hath freely offered himself to you to become yours, you may now delight in him also because you are sure he is so: whereof you cannot have a more satisfying assurance than from his so express saying,

"I love them that love me;"[1] and, "We love him, because he first loved us."[2]

6. Take especial heed of *more apparent and grosser transgressions;* nor account your security from the danger of them so much to stand in your being ordinarily out of the way of temptations to them, as in an habitual frame of holiness and the settled aversion of your heart to them. Endeavour a growing conformity to God in the temper of your spirit, and to be in love with purity,—that your heart may no more endure an impure thought than you would fire in your bosom. If you be herein careless and remiss and suffer your heart to grow dissolute, or more bold and adventurous in admitting sinful cogitations; or if you have more liking, or less dislike, of any wicked course wherein others take their liberty,—you are approaching the borders of a dangerous precipice. And if some greater breach hereupon ensue between God and you, what becomes of your delight in him? A sad interruption of such pleasant intercourse cannot but follow, both on his part and on yours. On *his part,* a suspension and restraint of those communications of light and grace which are necessary to your delight in him. He will be just in his way of dealing towards those of his own family, as well as merciful. It appears how much David's delight in God was intermitted upon his great transgression through God's withdrawing from him, when he prays he would "restore the joy of his salvation."[3] And on *your part* will ensue both less liking of God's presence, and a dread of it. Your inclination will not be towards him, as before; though the act of sin be soon over, the effect will remain,—even a carnal frame of spirit, that disaffects converse with God and cares not to come nigh him. And if that were not, a guilty fear would hold you off; so that if you were willing, you would not dare to approach him. Your liberty taken to sin would soon infer a bondage upon your spirit Godward, unless conscience be wholly asleep and you have learned a stupid, insolent confidence to affront God; which surely would sig-

[1] Prov. viii. 17. [2] 1 John iv. 19. [3] Ps. li. 12.

nify little to your delight in him. "Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles; . . . . then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God."[1] The conscience of unpurged iniquity will not let you lift up your face, or appear in that glorious presence.

7. Cherish the *great grace of humility*, and be ever mean and low in your own eyes. That temper carries in it even a natural disposition to delight in God. How sweet complacency will such a soul take in him! His light and glory shine with great lustre in the eyes of such a one, while there is not a nearer imagined lustre to vie therewith. Stars are seen at noon, by them that descend low into a deep pit. They will admire God but little that admire themselves much, and take little pleasure in him who are too much pleased with themselves. And how sweet a relish have his love and grace to an humble, lowly soul, that esteems itself less than the least of his mercies! With what ravishing delight will Divine mercy be entertained, when it is so unexpectedly vouchsafed; when this shall be the sense of the soul now caught into the embraces of God's love,—'What! I, vile creature, impure worm!—what! beloved of God?' Expectation, grounded especially upon an opinion of merit, would unspeakably lessen a favour if it were afforded; as also expected evils seem the less when they come. But the lowly soul, that apprehends desert of nothing but hell, is surprised and overcome with wonder and delight, when the great God expresses kindness towards it. Besides that, he more freely communicates himself to such: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit,"[2] etc. And he looks to such with a design of habitation;—heaven and earth are not to him so pleasant a dwelling. Down, then, into the dust: there you are in the fittest place and posture for delightful converse with God.

8. Reckon much upon *an eternal abode in that presence where is "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."* Enjoy, by

[1] Job xxii. 23, 26. [2] Isa. lxvi. 2.

a serious, believing foresight, the delights of heaven; labour to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Look beyond this your present state. Confine not your eye and delight to what is now to be enjoyed, but think of what shall be. Set before your eyes the glorious prospect of the blessed God communicating himself to that vast assembly of angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect," in clearest discoveries of his glory and richest effusions of his goodness. The best appearance of things in this world makes but a dull scene in comparison of this. If you look towards God, according to what now appears of his glory in the frame of the universe and the course of his administrations and government over his creatures, he hath not, it is true, left himself without witness. And you may behold much that would be to you the matter of delightful admiration, if your eye be clear, and can pierce through clouds and darkness and a manifold veil. He hath made this world, and is everywhere in it; but it knows him not. His "light shines in darkness that doth not comprehend it." Beams of his glory do everywhere break forth, through every creature, providence, law and ordinance of his. But much of his glory that shines in the creation is hid by a train of second causes, through which few look to the first. His laws men judge of according to their interests and inclinations; while the holy, glorious Majesty that enacted them is out of sight. His work in the world is carried on in a mystery. His interest lives, but is depressed. They who are most devoted to him are supported indeed by his invisible hand; but are, in the meantime, low, for the most part, and afflicted. If you now limit and confine your apprehensions of him to his present appearances, the matter of your delight is real, but much diminished. But conceive of him—as your faith can behold him at a distance—in that posture wherein, having settled the eternal state of things, he will finally show himself. Conceive him as having now gathered home all that have been recovered to him out of the apostacy, and joined them to those numberless legions of innocent and pure spirits about his throne that never offended. Conceive him

as dispensing rewards, pouring out blessings upon the loyal heads and hearts of them that expressed fidelity and duty to him in the time and state of trial and temptation; letting his glory shine out with bright and direct beams to so many beholding and admiring eyes; giving forth the full and satisfying communications of his love, and making rivers of pleasure flow perpetually, to the replenishing the vast, enlarged capacities of so innumerable a multitude of grateful, adoring spirits, by whom it is now sensibly to be perceived how his "fulness filleth all in all." Take this view of him; and let your faith and hope thus "enter into that which is within the veil." And remember there is only a little time between you and that blessed state,—that then you are to "enter into the joy of your Lord;" so that the very element and region wherein you are to live for ever shall be nothing else but delight and joy. In this way of believing foresight, and by this lawful and allowed prepossession of future blessedness, much surely would be added to your present delight in God. Should not the thoughts of him be pleasant to you, from whom you are expecting so great things? If your delight in him be any at all upon what you have already found and experienced of his goodness, it should be abundantly the more upon what you are by his word encouraged to look for.

And having thus given some account in what way delight in God is to be exercised and improved, it were a charitable hope that there would be little need to propound arguments to persuade unto it. But it were a hope not grounded upon common experience, which too plainly tells us, that though such directions as these are plain and obvious, not unknown to Christians, but only less considered,—whence it was not needless here to recommend them,—yet delight in God obtains little place in the practice of the most. There will therefore too probably be still much need of excitation.

And yet, because it is not multitude of words that is likely to do the business, but the weight of things, urged on by a more powerful hand than that of man; and that much

may be collected to this purpose from what hath been said of the sinfulness of the omission; I shall, with great brevity, offer these things only to be considered:—

Is it not a merciful vouchsafement, that the holy God allows you to place your delight on him and invites you to it? How much grace and love breathes in these words, "Delight thyself also in the LORD!" "Trust" in him was recommended before, and now this being added also, how plain is it that your ease and rest is the thing designed! Is it fit to receive so much kindness with neglect? Again, *he delights in you;*—I speak to such of whom this may be supposed. And it is indefinitely said, his "delights were with the sons of men."[1] Think what He is, and what you are; and at once both wonder and yield. And what else have you to delight in? what thing will you name that shall supply the place of GOD, or be to you in the stead of him? Moreover, who should delight in him but you,—his friends, his sons, those of his own house? Think what life and vigour it will infuse into you, and that "the joy of the LORD will be your strength."[2] How pleasantly will you hold on your course, and discharge all the other duties of this your present state! You must serve him. Dare you think of throwing off his yoke? How desirable is it, then, to take delight in him whom I must serve; which only makes that service acceptable to him and easy to myself! Further, this is a pleasure none can rob you of, a joy that cannot be taken from you. Other objects of your delight are vanishing daily. Neither men nor devils can ever hinder your delighting in God, if your hearts be so inclined. And were you never brought to take pleasure in any person or thing to which you had a former aversion? One that had wronged you might yet possibly win you by after-kindness. Give a reason why you should be more difficult towards the blessed God, that never wronged you, and whose way towards you hath constantly imported so much good-will!

And consider that your condition on earth is such as ex-

[1] Prov. viii. 31. [2] Neh. viii. 10.

poses you to many sufferings and hardships; which, by your not delighting in him, you can never be sure to avoid,—for they are things common to men; but which, by your delighting in him, you may be easily able to endure. Besides all this, seriously consider that you must die. You can make no shift to avoid that. How easily tolerable and pleasant will it be to think, then, of going to him with whom you have lived in a delightful communion before! And how dreadful to appear before him, to whom your own heart shall accuse you to have been, against all his importunities and allurements, a disaffected stranger!

To these I add the consideration in the other part of the verse: "And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." By "desire," it is plain we are to understand the thing desired; which is usual. By the thing desired, we must not be so unreasonable as to think is meant anything, whatsoever it be, that, even with the greatest extravagancy, we may set our hearts upon,—as worldly possessions, riches, honours, etc.: for it were most unbecoming that delight in God should be so mercenary or be propounded as the price of so mean things: yea, and if the matter were so to be understood, delight in God were a means to the attaining of these things as the end; which were to make the blessed God an inferior good to these. Nor can we suppose that one who delights in God should ever esteem any reward or recompense of another kind, greater than what he finds in this very delight itself. And besides, we are very prone to desire things that (as the case may be) would prove very hurtful to us. If God should gratify us with everything we fancy, he should many times please us to our ruin. And do we believe that when he hath won a person to place his delight and take pleasure in himself, he will requite him with a mischief?

Since, then, we may not understand him to mean that whatsoever we desire, if we delight in him, we shall have, we are to inquire further. And it is plain the things that can be supposed to be desired by such persons as are here spoken to, must be one of these two sorts: either things of a spiritual

nature, that tend directly to the gratification and advantage of the inward man; or else external good things, that make for the support and comfort of this present life. We will suppose it to be the one or the other of these; and shall show that whichsoever sort it be that is desired, delighting in God doth naturally infer the satisfaction, some way or other, of such desires.

1. Supposing they be *spiritual good things* that are desired, delight in God is most directly the satisfaction itself of such desire. Whatsoever purely spiritual good we can desire is either God himself, or somewhat in order to him. If it be God himself we desire, so far as we delight in him we enjoy him, and have what we would have; and can only enjoy him more fully by more entire and composed rest and delight in him. If it be somewhat in order to him, he is still supremely and ultimately desired in that very desire; so that in delighting in him we have our end, and that upon which this desire doth lastly terminate. And now, should not this be a great inducement to us to delight in God, that hereby our desires, the motions of our working hearts directed towards him, do immediately find in him a peaceful and pleasant rest, and turn into a satisfying fruition?

2. Supposing the things we desire be those of *an inferior kind*, delight in God doth not a little to the satisfying of them also. It doth not, as was said, entitle us to the things themselves we desire, whatever they be or how unsuitable soever to us; but,—

i. It *moderates* these desires, makes them sober, prudent, and rational, and capable of being satisfied with what is fit for us. He that is much habituated to delight in God, is not apt to foolish, extravagant desires. This is the sense of such a one, 'Not my will, Lord, but thine be done.' He may desire the same thing that others do, yet not with the same peremptory and precipitant desire, but with a desire tempered with submission and with a reserved deference of the matter to the Divine pleasure: 'This thing, Lord, I desire, if thou see good.' So that the general object of such a one's desire is

only that which in the Divine estimate is fit and good for him; and though he desire this or that particular thing, yet not as it is this thing, but as supposing it possible this thing may be judged fit for him by the supreme wisdom, whereto he hath referred the matter. But if it shall be judged otherwise, this thing falls without the compass of the general object of his desire, and in just construction he desires it not; for he desires it not otherwise than on that condition, that God sees it meet for him, and not longer than till he find He does not: in which case the sobriety and submissiveness of his former desire appears in his cheerful, patient want of the thing which he finds God hath thought fit to deny him. So that even then his desire is satisfied; that is, it doth not, as often it is with a carnal heart, turn, being crossed, into rage and madness, but into a complacential peace and rest in the Divine will. He is satisfied in what God had thought fit to do. Yea, the very thing is done which he would have done; God hath given him his heart's desire. For let the question be put to such a person, Do you desire such a thing, though God judge it will be hurtful to you or unfit for you? and no doubt he will, not in faint words that have no sense under them—as almost any other man would—but from his very heart and soul, say, No. And if he deliberate the matter of his own accord, or by any one's inquiry be occasioned to do so, this will be found the sense of his heart,—though his desire hath inclined to this or that thing in particular,—and this would be his prayer in such a case, 'Lord, if thy wisdom, which is infinitely more than mine, see this thing not fit, cross me, deny me in this desire of mine.' And this general desire at least, which is the measure of the particular one, is sure to be accomplished to one that hath God for his delight; for the promise is express and cannot fail, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God."[1]

And this love to God, or delight in him, as it entitles such to that his care and concern for them which is expressed

[1] Rom. viii. 28.

in this promise, so it doth *in its own nature* dispose their hearts to an acquiescence and satisfiedness therein; for love to God, where it is true, is supreme, and prevails over all other love to this or that particular good. Whence it cannot be but, if this love be in act,—as the text must be understood to call unto actual and exercised delight in God,—it must subdue and keep the heart so far subject to the Divine good pleasure, as that its desire and addictedness to this particular, lesser good (concerning which there may also be a just and rational doubt whether it will be now a good to him, yea or no) shall never be a matter of controversy and quarrel with Him who is, unquestionably, the supreme and universal Good. How will that one thought overcome, if such a one shall but apprehend God saying to him, 'Dost thou love me above all things, and wilt yet contend with me for such a trifle?'

And we may by the way note, that upon this ground of the *dubious mutability of external good things*,—which by circumstances may become evil to this or that person,—as they are not here, so nor can they be anywhere, the matter of a general, absolute promise, to be claimed indefinitely by any one's faith. The nature of the thing refuses it; for suppose we that what may, in this or that case, become evil or prejudicial to this or that person, doth now actually become so, and is the matter of an absolute promise now claimable by such a person, what would follow? That an *evil* is now the actual *matter of a promise!* than which, what can be said or supposed more absurd, when nothing can further or otherwise be the matter of a promise than *as it is good?* Wherefore that promise would, in the supposed case, degenerate,—as the matter of it is by the present circumstances varied,—and turn into a threatening. Wherefore, when that condition or previso is not expressly added to a promise concerning a temporal good, the very nature of the thing implies and requires it to be understood; for it is not,—otherwise than as qualified by that condition,—any way a promise. Now, he that is in the present exercise of delight in God hath his heart so set upon God and alienated from earthly things, as

that the present temper of it bears proportion to the natural tenor of such promises; and is not, otherwise than by the cessation of this delight, liable to the torture of unsatisfied desire in reference to these lower things: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, . . . yet I will rejoice in the LORD,"[1] etc. And as delight in God doth thus reduce and moderate desires in reference to any inferior good, so that, if it be withheld, they admit a satisfaction without it and the want of it is easily tolerable; so,—

ii. If it be granted, delight in God adds *a satisfying sweetness* to the enjoyment. A lover of God hath another taste and relish, even of earthly good things, than an earthly-minded man can have. He hath that sweet savour of the love of God upon his spirit, that imparts a sweetness to all the enjoyments of this world, beyond what such things in their own nature have with them. This makes "the righteous man's little, better than the riches of many wicked."[2]

Upon the whole, therefore, this is, if duly weighed, a mighty and most persuasive argument to delight in God; for it imports thus much, which I add for a close to this discourse: If you place your delight here, you are most certainly delivered from the vexation and torment of unsatisfied desire. The motions of your souls are sure to end in a pleasant rest. Your lesser desires will be swallowed up in greater, and all in the Divine fulness; so that you will now say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."[3] If you take no delight in God, your own souls will be a present hell to you. And it may be it is not enough considered how much the future hell stands also in unsatisfied desire; which desire,—all suitable objects being for ever cut off from it,—turns wholly to despair, rage, and torture; and that ravenous appetite, which would be preying upon external objects that now fail, turns inward, and, as an insatiable vulture, gnaws everlastingly the wretched soul itself.

And the beginnings of this hell you will now have within

[1] Hab. iii. 17, 18. [2] Ps. xxxvii. 16. [3] Ps. lxxiii. 25.

you, while you refuse to delight in God. The sapless, earthly vanities upon which your hearts are set, give you some present content, which allays your misery for a little while and renders it less sensible to you ; but they have nothing in them to answer the vast desires of a reasonable, immortal spirit : whereby you certainly doom yourselves to perpetual distress ; for in these false, vanishing shadows of goodness you *cannot* have satisfaction, and in the blessed God you *will not.*

THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS WEPT OVER LOST SOULS:

A TREATISE ON LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

WHEREIN SOMEWHAT IS OCCASIONALLY DISCOURSED, CONCERNING THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, AND HOW GOD IS SAID TO WILL THE SALVATION OF THEM THAT PERISH.

THE PREFACE.

When spiritual judgments do more eminently befall a people, great outward calamities do often ensue. We know it was so in the instance which the text here insisted on refers to. But it is not always so; the connection between these two sorts of judgments is not absolutely certain and necessary; yea, and is more frequent with the contraries of each. For this reason, therefore, and because judgments of the former kind are so inexpressibly greater and more tremendous, this discourse insists only upon them, about which serious monitions both have a clearer ground and are of greater importance; and wholly waives the latter.

Too many are apt first to fancy similitudes between the state of things with one people and another, and then to draw inferences; being perhaps imposed upon by a strong imagination in both, which yet must pass with them for a spirit of prophecy; and perhaps they take it not well if it do not so with others too. It were indeed the work of another prophet certainly to accommodate and make application of what was spoken by a former, to a distinct time and people. It is enough for us to learn, from such sayings as this of our Saviour, those rules of life and practice, such instructions and cautions, as are common to all times, without arrogating to ourselves his prerogative of foretelling events that shall happen in this or that. The affectation of venturing upon futurity and of foreboding direful things to kingdoms and nations, may, besides its being without sufficient ground, proceed from some or other very bad principle: dislike of the present methods of Providence; weariness and impatiency of our present condition; too great proneness to wish what we take upon ourselves to predict, the

prediction importing more heat of anger than certainty of foresight; a wrathful spirit, that would presently fetch down "fire from heaven" upon such as favour not our inclinations and desires, so that, as the poet speaks, whole cities should be overturned at our request, if the heavenly powers would be so easy as to comply with such furious imprecations;—a temper that ill agrees with humanity itself, not to care at what rate of common calamity and misery a purchase be made of our own immunity from sufferings; nay, to be willing to run the most desperate hazard in the case, and even covet a general ruin to others, upon a mere apprehended possibility that our case may be mended by it, when it may be more probable to become much worse. But O how disagreeable is it to the spirit of our merciful Lord and Saviour, whose name we bear, upon any terms to delight in human miseries! The greatest honour men of that complexion are capable of doing the Christian name, were to disclaim it. Can such angry heats have place in Christian breasts, as shall render them the well-pleased spectators, yea, authors, of one another's calamities and ruin? Can the tears that issued from these compassionate, blessed eyes, upon the foresight of Jerusalem's woful catastrophe, do nothing towards the quenching of these flames?

But I add, that the too intent fixing of our thoughts upon any supposable events in this world argues at least a narrow, carnal mind, that draws and gathers all things into time, as despairing of eternity; and reckons no better state of things considerable, that is not to be brought about under their own present view in this world; as if it were uncertain or insignificant that there shall be unexceptionable, eternal order and rectitude in another.

It is again as groundless, and may argue as ill a mind, to prophesy smooth and pleasant things in a time of abounding wickedness. The safer, middle course is, without God's express warrant, not to prophesy at all, but, as we have opportunity, to warn and instruct men with "all meekness and long-suffering;" for which the Lord's ordinary messengers can never want his warrant: and, after our blessed Saviour's most imitable example, to scatter our tears over the impenitent, even upon the too probable apprehension of the temporal judgments which hang over their heads, but most of all upon the account of their liableness to the more dreadful ones of the other state; which in the following discourse I hope it is

made competently evident this lamentation of our Saviour hath ultimate reference unto. For the other, though we know them to be due and most highly deserved, yet concerning the actual infliction of them, even upon obstinate and persevering sinners, we cannot pronounce. We have no settled constitution or rule by which we can conclude it, any more than that outward felicity or prosperity shall be the constant portion of good men in this world. The great God hath reserved to himself a latitude of acting more arbitrarily, both as to threatenings and promises of this nature. If the accomplishment of either could be certainly expected, it should be of the promises rather; because as to promised rewards God is pleased to make himself debtor, and a right accrues to them to whom the promise is made, if either the promise be absolute or made with any certain condition that is actually performed. But God is always the *creditor pœnæ;* "the right to punish" remains wholly in himself, the exacting whereof he may therefore suspend, without any appearance of wrong, as seemeth good unto him. If, therefore, he may withhold temporal blessings from good and pious men, to which they have a remote and fundamental right, as having reserved to himself the judgment of the fit time and season of bestowing them; much more doth it belong to his wisdom to fix the bounds of his patience and long-suffering, and determine the season of animadverting upon more open and insolent offenders by temporal punishments, according as shall make most for the ends of his government and finally prove more advantageous to the dignity and glory of it. The practice, therefore, of our Saviour, in speaking so positively concerning the approaching fall and ruin of Jerusalem, is no pattern unto us. He spake not only with the knowledge of a prophet, but with the authority of a judge; and his words may be considered both as a prediction and a sentence. We can pretend to speak in neither capacity touching things of this nature.

But for the everlasting punishments in another world, that belong to unreconciled sinners who refuse "to know the things of their peace," the gospel-constitution hath made the connection firm and unalterable between their continuing, unrepented wickedness, and those punishments. When, therefore, we behold the impudent, provoking sins of the age wherein we live against the natural, eternal law of our Creator, persisted in with all the marks of

infidelity and obduration against the truth and grace that so gloriously shine forth in the gospel of our Redeemer, we may, after him, speak positively : "He that believeth not shall be damned" —"is condemned already"—"shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "If ye believe not that I am *He*, ye shall die in your sins." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And here, how doth it become us too, in conformity to his great example, to speak compassionately, and as those that in some measure "know the terror of the Lord!" O how doleful is the case when we consider the inconsistent notions of many with, not this or that particular doctrine or article of the Christian faith, but with the whole sum of Christianity ; the atheism of some, the avowed mere theism of others,—the former sort far outdoing the Jewish infidelity ; which people, besides the rational means of demonstrating a Deity common to them with the rest of mankind, could, upon the account of many things peculiar to themselves, be in no suspense concerning this matter. How great was their reverence of the books of the Old Testament, especially those of Moses ; their knowledge most certain of plain and most convincing matters of fact ! how long the government of their nation had been an immediate theocracy ! what evident tokens of the Divine presence had been among them from age to age ! in how wonderful a manner they were brought out of Egypt through the Red Sea, and conducted all along through the wilderness ! how glorious an appearance and manifestation of himself God afforded to them at the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai ! and by how apparent exertions of the Divine power the former inhabitants were expelled and they settled in the promised land ! Upon all this, they could be in no more doubt concerning the existence of a Deity, than of the sun in the firmament. Whereas we are put to prove, in a Christian nation, that this world and its continual successive inhabitants have a wise, intelligent Maker and Lord, and that all things came not into the state wherein they are, by,—no man can imagine what,—either fatal necessity or casualty.

But both sorts agree in—what I would principally remark—the disbelief of Christ being the Messiah. And so, with both, the whole business of Christianity must be a fable and a cheat. And thus it is determined, not by men that have made it their business to consider and examine the matter,—for the plain evidence of

things cannot but even obtrude a conviction upon any diligent inquirer,—but by such as have only resolved not to consider; who have beforehand settled their purpose, never to be awed by the apprehension of an invisible Ruler into any course of life that shall bear hard upon sensual inclination, have already chosen their master, enslaved themselves to brutal appetite, and are so habituated to that mean servility, made it so connatural, so deeply inward to themselves, so much their very life, as that, through the pre-apprehended pain and uneasiness of a violent rupture in tearing themselves from themselves, it is become their interest not to admit any serious thought. Any such thought they are concerned (they reckon) to fence against, as against the point of a sword;—it strikes at their only life; the brute must die, that, by a happy παλιγγενεσία, they may be "again born" men. That is the design of Christianity, to restore men to themselves again; and because it hath this tendency, it is therefore not to be endured. And all the little residue of human wit which is yet left them (which, because the sensual nature is predominant, is pressed into a subserviency to the interest and defence of a brutal life) only serves them to turn everything of serious religion into ridicule; and being themselves resolved never to be reasoned into any seriousness, they have the confidence to make the trial whether all other men can be jested out of it.

If this were not the case,—if such persons could allow themselves to think, and debate the matter,—how certain would the victory, how glorious would the triumph be, of the Christian religion, over all the little cavils they are wont to allege against it! Let their own consciences testify in the case, whether ever they have applied themselves to any solemn disquisition concerning this important affair, but only contented themselves with being able, amidst transient discourse, to cast out now and then some oblique glance against somewhat or other that was appendant or more remotely belonging to the Christian profession,—in so much haste as not to stay for an answer: and because they may have surprised sometimes one or other not so ready at a quick repartee, or who reckoned the matter to require solemn and somewhat larger discourse, which they have not had the patience to hear, whether they have not gone away puffed and swollen with the conceit that they have whiffled Christianity away quite off the stage with their

profane breath ; as if its firm and solid strength, wherein it stands stable as a rock of adamant, depended upon this or that sudden, occasional, momentary effort on the behalf of it. But if such have a mind to try whether anything can be strongly said in defence of that sacred profession, let them considerately peruse what hath been written by divers to that purpose. And, not to engage them in any very tedious, longsome task, if they like not to travel through the somewhat abstruser work of the most learned Hugo Grotius, "De Veritate Christianæ Religionis," or the more voluminous Huetius's "Demonstratio Evangelica," or divers others that might be named, let them but patiently and leisurely read over that later very plain and clear, but nervous and solid, discourse of Dr. Parker upon this subject, and judge then whether the Christian religion want evidence ; or whether nothing can be alleged why we of this age, so long after Christ's appearance upon the stage of the world, are to reckon ourselves obliged to profess Christianity and observe the rules of that holy profession.

And really if, upon utmost search, it shall be found to have firm truth at the bottom, it makes itself so necessary, (which must be acknowledged part of that truth,) that any one that hath wit enough to be the author of a jest might understand it to be a thing not to be jested with. It trifles with no man ; and, where it is once sufficiently propounded, leaves it no longer indifferent whether we will be of it or no. Supposing it true, it is strange if we can pretend it not to be sufficiently propounded to us ; or that we are destitute of sufficient means to come by the knowledge of that truth ! Was this religion instituted only for one nation or age ? Did the Son of God descend from heaven, put on flesh, and die ; had we an incarnate Deity conversant among men on earth and made a sacrifice for the sins of men,—and hath he left the world at liberty, whether, upon any notice hereof, they should inquire and concern themselves about him or no ? Being incarnate, he could not, as such, be everywhere ; nor was it fit he should be long here, or needful (and therefore not fit) he should die often. It was condescension enough that he vouchsafed once to appear in so mean and self-abasing a form and offered himself to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And whereas he hath himself founded a dominion over us in his own blood, did die, and revive, and rise again, that he might be "Lord of the living

and of the dead ;" and the eternal Father hath hereupon "highly exalted him, given him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and that all should confess that he is the Lord, to the praise and glory of God,"—and hath required that all should "honour the Son" as Himself is to be honoured, hath given him "power over all flesh, and made him head of all things to the church ;" was it ever intended men should generally remain exempt from obligation to observe, believe, and obey him ? Was it his own intention to waive or not insist upon, his own most sacred and so dearly-acquired rights,—to quit his claim to the greatest part of mankind ? Why did he then issue out his commission, as soon as he was risen from the dead, to teach all nations, to proselyte the world to himself, to baptize them into his name, with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost ? O the great and venerable names that are named upon professing Christians ! Could it be his intention to leave it lawful to men to choose this, or any, or no religion, as their humours or fancies or lusts should prompt them ? to disregard and deride his holy doctrines,—violate and trample upon his just and equal laws,—reject and contemn his offered favours and mercy,—despise and profane his sacred institutions ? When he actually makes his demand and lays his claim, what amazing guilt, how swift destruction, must they incur, that dare adventure to deny the Lord that bought them ! And they that shall do it among a Christianized people, upon the pretended insufficiency of the revelation they have of him, do but heighten the affront and increase the provocation. It is to charge the whole Christian institution with foolery, as pretending to oblige men, when they cannot know to what, how, or upon what ground, they should be obliged ; to pronounce the means and methods inept and vain which he hath thought sufficient, and only fit, for the propagating and continuing Christianity in the world ; to render the rational reception of it, from age to age, impossible in his appointed way, or unless men should be taught by angels or voices from heaven, or that miracles should be so very frequent and common as thereby also to become useless to their end : and so would be to make the whole frame of Christian religion an idle impertinency, and, in reference to its avowed design, a self-repugnant thing ; and consequently were to impute folly to Him who is the "Wisdom of God."

And how are other things known, of common concernment and whereof an immediate knowledge is as little possible? Can a man satisfy himself that he hath a title to an estate conveyed down to him by very ancient writings, the witnesses whereof are long since dead and gone? or that he is obliged by laws made many an age ago? Or could any records be preserved with more care and concern than those wherein our religion lies, or be more secure from designed or material depravation? But this is no place to reason these things. Enough is said by others, referred to before. I only further say, if any that have the use of their understandings, living in a Christian nation, think to justify their infidelity and disobedience to the Son of God by pretending they had no sufficient means to know him to be so, the excuse will avail them alike as that did him who insolently said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice? I know not the LORD, neither will I," etc. For have not we as good means to know who Christ is as the Egyptians of that time had to know who was the God of Israel, though afterwards he was more "known by the judgments which he executed?" Although the knowledge of the only true God be natural, and the obligation thereto common to men, yet the indisposition to use their understanding this way is so great and general, and the express revelation that Jesus Christ was the Son of God requires so much less labour to understand it than there is in arguing out the existence and attributes of God by an inhabile sluggish mind, that the difference cannot be great, if any, on that side. This latter only needs the inquiry, whence the revelation comes; which as it is not difficult in itself, so this occasion, namely, of its being proposed, doth invite and urge to it: whereas the generality of the Pagan world have little of external inducement leading them into inquiries concerning the true God. Therefore, all circumstances considered, I see not how they that live under the gospel can be thought to have less advantage and obligation to own Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God, than the rest of the world to own the only living and true God; or that the former should be less liable to the revelation of the wrath of God from heaven for holding supernatural truth in unrighteousness, than the other for doing so injurious violence to that which is merely natural. Unto what severities, then, of the Divine wrath and justice, even of the highest kind, do multitudes lie open in our days!

For besides those (much fewer) mental or notional infidels, that believe not the principles of the Christian religion against the clearest evidence, how vastly greater is the number of them that are so in heart and practice against their professed belief; that live in utter estrangement from God, as without him in the world, or in open enmity against him, and contrariety to the known rules of the religion they profess! how many that understand nothing of its principal and plainest doctrines! As if nothing were requisite to distinguish the Christian from the Pagan world more than an empty name: or as if the Redeemer of sinners had died upon the cross that men might more securely remain "alienated from the life of God,"—not to reconcile and reduce them to him; or that they might with safety indulge appetite, mind earthly things, make the world their god, gratify the flesh, and make provision to fulfil the lusts of it, defy heaven, affront their Maker, live in malice, envy, hatred to one another,—not to bless them, by turning them from these impieties and iniquities! As if it were so obscurely hinted as that it could not be taken notice of,—"that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching them to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, so looking for the blessed hope;" and that "Christ gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works!" How many, again, are Christians, they know not why; upon the same terms that others are Mohammedans,—because it is the religion of their country,—by fate or by accident, not by their own choice and judgment! The same inconsideration makes them be Christians that makes others be none.

And now, shall our Redeemer be left to weep alone over these perishing souls? Have we no tears to spend upon this doleful subject? "O that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains!" Is it nothing to us, that multitudes are sinking, going down into perdition, under the name of Christian, under the seal of baptism, from under the means of life and salvation?—perishing,—and we can do nothing to prevent it! We know they must perish that do not repent and turn to God, and love him above all, even with all their hearts and souls, and mind and might; that do not believe in his Son and pay him homage as their rightful Lord, sincerely subjecting themselves to his laws and government. But

this they will not understand or not consider. Our endeavours to bring them to it are ineffectual,—it is but faint breath we utter. Our words drop and die between us and them! We speak to them in the name of the eternal God that made them, of the great Jesus who bought them with his blood, and they regard it not. The Spirit of the Lord is in a great degree departed from among us, and we take it not to heart! We are sensible of lesser grievances; —are grieved that men will not be more entirely proselyted to our several parties and persuasions rather than that they are so disinclined to become proselytes to *real Christianity;* and seem more deeply concerned to have Christian religion so or so modified than whether there shall be any such thing, or whether men be saved by it or lost!

This sad case, that so many were likely to be lost under the first sound of the gospel, and the most exemplary temper of our blessed Lord in reference to it, are represented in the following treatise; with design to excite their care for their own souls who need to be warned, and the compassions of others for them who are so little apt to take warning. The good Lord grant it may be, some way or other, useful for good!

JOHN HOWE.

THE

REDEEMER'S TEARS WEPT OVER LOST SOULS.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

"AND WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY, AND WEPT OVER IT, SAYING, IF THOU HADST KNOWN, EVEN THOU, AT LEAST IN THIS THY DAY, THE THINGS WHICH BELONG UNTO THY PEACE! BUT NOW THEY ARE HID FROM THINE EYES."

We have here a compassionate lamentation in the midst of a solemn triumph. Our Lord's approach unto Jerusalem at this time and his entrance into it, as the foregoing history shows, carried with them some face of regal and triumphal pomp, but with such allays as discovered a mind most remote from ostentation, and led by judgment, not vain-glory, to transmit through a dark umbrage some glimmerings only of that excellent majesty which both his Sonship and his Mediatorship entitled him unto; a very modest and mean specimen of his true, indubious royalty and kingly state; such as might rather intimate than plainly declare it, and rather afford an *after instruction* to teachable minds, than beget a *present conviction* and dread in the stupidly obstinate and unteachable. And this effect we find it had, as is observed by another evangelical historian, who, relating the same matter,—how in his passage to Jerusalem the people met him with branches of palm-trees and joyful hosannas, he riding upon an ass's colt, as princes or judges, to signify meekness as much as state, were wont to do,[1]—tells us, "These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when

[1] Judges v. 10.

Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him."[1] For great regard was had in this,—as in all the acts of his life and ministry, to that last and conclusive part, his dying a sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of men,—to observe all along that mediocrity and steer that middle course between obscurity and a terrifying, overpowering glory, that this solemn oblation of himself might neither be prevented nor be disregarded. Agreeably to this design and the rest of his course, he doth, in this solemnity, rather discover his royal state and dignity by a *dark emblem*, than by an *express representation*, and shows in it more of meekness and humility than of awful majesty and magnificence; as was formerly predicted, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."[2]

And how little he was taken with this piece of state is sufficiently to be seen in this paragraph of the chapter. His mind is much more taken up in the foresight of Jerusalem's sad case; and therefore being come within view of it,—which he might very commodiously have in the descent of the higher opposite hill, Mount Olivet,—"he beheld the city," it is said, "and wept over it." Two things concur to make up the cause of this sorrow:—1. The greatness of the calamity; Jerusalem, once so dear to God, was to suffer, not a scar, but a ruin: "The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another;"—and, 2, The lost opportunity of preventing it: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes;"[3] and again, "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

[1] John xii. 16. [2] Zech. ix. 9. [3] Luke xix. 42.

First, The calamity was greater in *his* eyes than it can be in *ours.* His large and comprehensive mind could take the compass of this sad case. Our thoughts cannot reach far, yet we can apprehend what may make this case very deplorable: we can consider Jerusalem as the city of the great King, where was the palace and throne of the Majesty of heaven, vouchsafing to "dwell with men on earth." Here the Divine light and glory had long shone; here was the sacred Shechinah, the dwelling-place of the Most High, the symbols of his presence, the seat of worship, the mercy-seat, the place of receiving addresses and of dispensing favours,—"The house of prayer for all nations." To his own people this was the city of their solemnities, "whither the tribes were wont to go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD; for there were set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David."[1] He that was so great a lover of the souls of men, how grateful and dear to his heart had the place been where, through the succession of many by-past ages, the great God did use, though more obscurely, to unfold his kind propensions towards sinners, to hold solemn treaties with them, to make himself known, to draw and allure souls into his own holy worship and acquaintance! And now that the dismal prospect presents itself of desolation and ruin, ready to overwhelm all this glory and lay waste the dwellings of Divine love, his sorrow must be conceived proportionable to the greatness of this desolating change.

Secondly, And the opportunity of prevention was quite lost! There was an opportunity; he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,—he came to them as his own. Had they received him, O how joyful a place had Jerusalem been! How glorious had the triumphs of the *love of* God been there, had they repented, believed, obeyed! These were the things that belonged to their peace; this was their opportunity, "their day of visitation;" these were the things that might have been done within that day; but it was now too

[1] Ps. cxxii. 4, 5.

late,—their day was over, and the "things of their peace hid from their eyes:" and how fervent were his desires they had done otherwise, taken the wise and safe course! "If thou hadst known!" The words admit the optative form, εἰ being put, as it is observed to be sometimes with other authors, for εἴθε, *utinam:* "O that thou hadst known,—I wish thou hadst!" His sorrow must be proportionable to his love; or otherwise, we may conceive the sentence incomplete, part cut off by a more emphatical *aposiopesis*, tears interrupting speech, and imposing a more speaking silence; which imports an affection beyond all words. They that were anciently so over-officious as to rase those words, "and wept over it," out of the canon, as thinking it unworthy so Divine a person to shed tears, did greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, which elsewhere speak of our Lord's weeping; nor the power of Divine love, now become incarnate; nor, indeed, the true perfections and properties of human nature: otherwise they had never taken upon them to reform the Gospel, and reduce not only Christianity, but Christ himself, to the measures and square of their stoical philosophy: but these have also met with a like ancient confutation.

One thing, before we proceed, needs some disquisition, namely, whether this lamentation of our blessed Lord do refer only or ultimately to the temporal calamity he foresaw coming upon Jerusalem, or whether it had not a further and more principal reference to their spiritual and eternal miseries, that were certain to be concomitant and consequent thereunto? Where let it be considered,—

1. That very dreadful spiritual plagues and judgments did accompany their destruction very generally, which every one knows who is acquainted with their after-story;—that is, that takes notice what spirit reigned among them, and what their behaviour was towards our Lord himself and afterwards towards his apostles and disciples, all along to their fearful catastrophe, as it may be collected from the sacred records and other history. What blindness of mind, what hardness of heart, what mighty prejudice, what inflexible obstinacy,

against the clearest light, the largest mercy, the most perspicuous and most gracious doctrine and the most glorious works wrought to confirm it,—against the brightest beams and evidences of the Divine truth, love, and power! What persevering impenitency and infidelity against God and Christ, proceeding from the bitterest enmity! "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father."[1] What mad rage and fury against one another, even when death and destruction were at the very door! Here were all the tokens imaginable of the most tremendous infatuation and of their being forsaken of God. Here was a concurrence of all kinds of spiritual judgments in the highest degree.

2. That the concomitancy of such spiritual evils with their temporal destruction our Lord foreknew, as well as their temporal destruction itself. It lay equally in view before him, and was as much under his eye. He that knew what *was* in man could as well tell what *would be* in him; and by the same light by which he could immediately look into hearts, he could as well see into futurities, and as well the one futurity as the other. The knowledge of the one he did not owe to his human understanding; to his Divine understanding, whereby he knew all things, the other could not be hid.

3. The connection between the impenitency and infidelity that prove to be final, and eternal misery, is known to us all. Of his knowledge of it, therefore, whose law hath made the connection, besides what there is in the nature of the things themselves, there can be no doubt.

4. That the miseries of the soul, especially such as prove incurable and eternal, are in themselves far the greatest, we all acknowledge; nor can we make a difficulty to believe that our Lord apprehended and considered things according as they were in themselves, so as to allow everything its own proper weight and import in his estimating of them. These things seem all very evident to any eye.

Now, though it be confessed not impossible, that of things

[1] John xv. 24.

so distinct from one another as outward and temporal evils and those that are spiritual and eternal, even befalling the same persons, one may for the present consider the one without attending to the other or making distinct reflection thereon at the same time; yet how unlikely is it, these things bordering so closely upon one another as they did in the present case, that so *comprehensive* a mind as our Saviour's was, sufficiently able to enclose them both,—and so *spiritual* a mind, apt no doubt to consider most what was in itself most considerable,—should, in a solemn lamentation of so sad a case, wholly overlook the saddest part, and stay his thoughts only upon the surface and outside of it!

That he mentions only the approaching outward calamity,[1] was that he spake in the hearing of the multitude and upon the way, but in passing, when there was not opportunity for large discourse; and therefore he spake what might soonest strike their minds, was most liable to common apprehension, and might most deeply affect ordinary and not yet enough prepared hearers.

And he spake what he had, no doubt, a deep sense of himself. Whatever of tender compassions might be expected from the most perfect humanity and benignity could not be wanting in him, upon the foresight of such a calamity as was coming upon that place and people. But yet, what was the sacking of a city, the destroying of pompous buildings, that were all of a perishable material, the mangling of human flesh, over which the worm was otherwise shortly to have had dominion, to the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of their recovery and reconciliation to him, and their subjection to his wrath and curse for ever? When also it is plain he considered that perverse temper of mind and spirit in them as the cause of their ruin, which his own words imply; that "the things which belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes," and that the things he foretold should befall them, because "they knew not the time of their visitation." For what could the

[1] Luke xix. 43, 44.

things be that belonged to their peace, but turning to God, believing in himself as the Messiah, bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance? Whence also there must be another latent and concealed meaning of their peace itself than only their continued amity with the Roman state;—their peace with heaven, their being set right and standing in favour and acceptance with God. For was it ever the first intention of the things enjoined in the gospel, but to entitle men to earthly, secular benefits?

Nor can we doubt but the same things lay deep in the mind of our blessed Lord when he uttered these words, as when he spake those so very like them, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."[1] These other were not spoken, indeed, at the same time, but very soon after: *those* we are considering, in his way to the city; *these* when he was come into it,—most probably, by the series of the evangelical history, the second day, after his having lodged the first night at Bethany. But it is plain they have the same sense, and that the same things lay with great weight upon his spirit; so that the one passage may contribute much to the enlightening and expounding of the other.

Now, what can be meant by that, "I would have gathered you as the hen her chickens under her wings?" Could it intend a political meaning;—that he would have been a temporal prince and saviour to them; which he so earnestly declined and disclaimed, professing to the last his kingdom was not of this world? It could mean no other thing but that he would have reduced them back to God, have gathered and united them under his own gracious and safe conduct in order thereto, have secured them from the Divine wrath and justice, and have conferred on them spiritual and eternal

[1] Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

blessings. In a like sense their *peace* here was no doubt more principally to be understood; and their loss and forfeiture of it, by their not understanding the things belonging thereto, considered and lamented.

Therefore the principal intendment of this lamentation, though directly applied to a community and the formed body of a people, is equally applicable unto particular persons living under the gospel; or to whom the ordinary means of their conversion and salvation are vouchsafed, but are neglected by them and forfeited. We may therefore thus sum up the meaning and sense of these words:—That it is a thing in itself very lamentable, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus, when such as, living under the gospel, have had a day of grace and an opportunity of knowing the things belonging to their peace, have so outworn that day and lost their opportunity, that the things of their peace are quite hid from their eyes. Where we have these distinct heads of discourse to be severally considered and insisted on:—

I. What are *the things necessary to be known* by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace.

II. That they have *a day or season* wherein to know, not these things only, but the whole compass of their case, and what the knowledge of those things more immediately belonging to their peace supposes and depends upon.

III. That *this day hath its bounds and limits;* so that when it is over and lost, those things are for ever hid from their eyes.

IV. That this is a *case to be considered with deep resentment and lamentation,* and was so by our Lord Jesus.

I. What are the things necessary to be known by such as live under the gospel, as immediately belonging to their peace. Where we are more particularly to inquire,—1. What those things themselves are; 2. What sort of knowledge of them it is that is here meant, and made necessary.

1. What *the things* are *which belong to the peace of a people* living under the gospel. The things belonging to a people's peace are not throughout the same with all. *Living,* or *not*

living under the gospel, makes a considerable difference in the matter. Before the incarnation and public appearance of our Lord, something was not necessary among the Jews that afterwards became necessary. It was sufficient to them before, to believe in a Messiah to come, more indefinitely. Afterwards he plainly tells them, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."[1] Believing in Christ cannot be necessary to Pagans that never heard of him, *as a duty*, howsoever necessary it may be *as a means*. Their not believing in him cannot be itself a sin, though by it they should want remedy for their other sins. But it more concerns us who do live under the gospel, to apprehend aright what is necessary for ourselves. That is a short and full summary which the apostle gives, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."[2] The gospel finds us in a state of apostasy from God, both as our sovereign ruler and sovereign good; not apt to obey and glorify him as the former, nor enjoy him and be satisfied in him as the latter. Repentance towards God cures and removes this disaffection of our minds and hearts towards him, under both these notions. By it the whole soul turns to him with this sense and resolution: 'I have been a rebellious, disloyal wretch, against the high authority and most rightful government of Him who gave me breath and whose creature I am. I will live no longer thus. Lo! now I come back unto thee, O Lord; thou art my Lord and God. Thee I now design to serve and obey as the Lord of my life. Thee I will fear. Unto thee I subject myself, to live no longer after my own will, but thine. I have been hitherto a miserable, forlorn, distressed creature, destitute of anything that could satisfy me or make me happy;—have set my heart upon a vain and thorny world, that had nothing in it answerable to my real necessities; that hath flattered and mocked me often, never satisfied me; and been wont to requite my pursuits of satisfaction from it with vexation and trouble, and "pierce me through with many sorrows." I have borne in the mean-

[1] John viii. 24. [2] Acts xx. 21.

time a disaffected heart towards thee; have therefore cast thee out of my thoughts; so that amidst all my disappointments and sorrows, it never came into my mind to say, "Where is God my Maker?" I could never savour anything spiritual or divine; and was ever more ready in distress to turn myself any way than that which I ought,—towards Thee. I now see and bemoan my folly, and with a convinced, self-judging heart, betake myself to thee. "The desire of my soul is now to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."'

This is "repentance toward God," and is one thing belonging and most simply necessary to our peace. But though it be most necessary, it is not enough. It answers to something of our wretched case, but not to everything. We were, in our state of apostasy, averse and disaffected to God. To this evil, repentance towards him is the opposite and only proper remedy. But besides our being without inclination towards him, we are also without interest in him. We not only had unjustly cast off him, but were also most justly cast off by him. Our injustice had set us against him, and his justice had set him against us. We need, in order to our peace with him, to be relieved as well against his justice as our own injustice. What if, now we would return to him, he will not receive us?—and he will not receive us for our own sakes. He must have a recompense for the wrong we had done him by our rebellion against his government and our contempt of his goodness. Our repentance is no expiation. Nor had we of our own, or were capable of obliging him to give us, the power and grace to repent. Our high violation of the sacred rights and honour of the Godhead made it necessary, in order to our peace and reconciliation, there should be a sacrifice, and a mediator between him and us. He hath judged it not honourable to him, not becoming him, to treat with us or vouchsafe us favours, upon other terms. And since he thought it necessary to insist upon having a sacrifice, he judged it necessary too to have one proportionable to the

wrong done, lest he should make the majesty of heaven cheap, or occasion men to think it a light matter to have fundamentally overturned the common order which was settled between himself and men. The whole earth could not have afforded such a sacrifice;—it must be supplied from heaven. His co-eternal Son, made man, and so uniting heaven and earth in his own person, undertakes to be that sacrifice, and, in the virtue of it, to be a standing, continual mediator between God and us. Through him, and for his sake, all acts and influences of grace are to proceed towards us. No sin is to be forgiven, no grace to be conferred, but upon his account. It is reckoned most God-like, most suitable to the Divine greatness, once offended, to do nothing that shall import favour towards sinners, but upon his constant interposition. Him hath he set over us, and directed that all our applications to himself, and all our expectations from him, should be through him. "Him hath he exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give us repentance and remission of sins."[1] Now to one so high in power over us, he expects we should pay a suitable homage. That homage the Holy Scripture calls by the name of *faith, believing on him:* "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."[2] So that when by repentance we turn to God, as our end, we must also apply ourselves by faith to our Lord Jesus Christ, as our way to that end: which till we do, we are in rebellion still, and know not what belongs to our peace. He insists that his Son, into whose hands he hath committed our affairs, should be honoured by us as he himself requires to be.[3]

Now these two things sum up our part of the covenant between God and us. By *repentance*, we again take God for our God: repenting, we return to him as our God. By *faith*, we take his Son for our *Prince and Saviour*. These

[1] Acts v. 31. [2] Rom. iii. 25, 26. [3] John v. 23.

things, by the tenor of the evangelical covenant, are required of us. Peace is settled between God and us—as it is usually with men towards one another after mutual hostilities—by striking a covenant. And in our case, it is a covenant by sacrifice, as you have seen. Nor are harder terms than these imposed upon us. Dost thou now, sinner, apprehend thyself gone off from God, and find a war is commenced and on foot, between God and thee? He can easily conquer and crush thee to nothing, but he offers thee terms of peace upon which he is willing to enter into covenant with thee. Dost thou like his terms? Art thou willing to return to him, and take him again for thy God; to resign and commit thyself, with unfeigned trust and subjection, into the hands of his Son thy Redeemer? These are "the things which belong to thy peace." See that thou now know them.

2. But *what knowledge of them* is it that is here meant? The thing speaks itself. It is not a mere contemplative knowledge. We must so know them as to do them; otherwise the increase of knowledge is the increase of sorrow. Thy guilt and misery will be the greater. To know anything that concerns our practice is to no purpose, if we do not practise it. It was a Hebrew form of speech, and is a common form, by words of knowledge to imply practice; it being taken for granted, that in matters so very reasonable and important, if what we are to do, once be rightly known, it will be done. Thus elsewhere the same great requisites to eternal life and blessedness are expressed by our Lord: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;" it being supposed and taken for granted, that a true, vivid knowledge of God and Christ will immediately form the soul to all suitable dispositions and deportments towards the one and the other, and, consequently, to all *men* also, as Christian precepts do direct to all the acts of sobriety, justice, and charity, unto which the law of Christ obliges. An habitual course of sin in any kind is inconsistent with this knowledge of the "things of our peace," and therefore with our peace itself. All sin is

in a true sense reducible to ignorance, and customary sinning into total destitution of divine knowledge, according to the usual style of the sacred writings: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God."[1] "He that sinneth,"—that is a doer of sin, *κακοποιῶν*, "a worker of iniquity,"—"hath not seen God."[2]

II. Such as live under the gospel have *a day, or a present opportunity,* for the obtaining the knowledge of these things immediately belonging to their peace, and of whatsoever is besides necessary thereunto. I say nothing what opportunities they have who never lived under the gospel; who yet no doubt might generally know more than they do, and know better what they do know. It suffices us, who enjoy the gospel, to understand our own advantages thereby. Nor, as to those who do enjoy it, is every one's day of equal clearness. How few, in comparison, have ever seen such a day as Jerusalem at this time did,—made by the immediate beams of the Sun of righteousness; our Lord himself vouchsafing to be their instructor, so "speaking as never man did," and with such authority as far outdid their other teachers, and astonished the hearers! In what transports did he use to leave those that heard him, wheresoever he came, "wondering at the gracious words that came out of his mouth!" And with what mighty and beneficial works was he wont to recommend his doctrine, shining in the glorious power and savouring of the abundant mercy of heaven, so as every apprehensive mind might see the Deity was incarnate, God was come down to treat with men, and allure them into the knowledge and love of himself! "The Word was made flesh." What unprejudiced mind might not perceive it to be so? He was there manifested and veiled at once;—both expressions are used concerning the same matter. The divine beams were somewhat obscured, but did yet ray through that veil; so that his glory was beheld as "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."[3] This Sun shone with a mild and benign, but with a powerful,

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 34. [2] 1 John iii. 6. [3] John i. 14.

vivifying light. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Such a light created unto the Jews "this their day." Happy Jews, if they had understood their own happiness! And the days that followed to them, for a while, and the Gentile world, were not inferior, in some respects brighter and more glorious,—the more copious gift of the Holy Ghost being reserved unto the crowning and enthroning of the victorious Redeemer,—when the everlasting gospel flew like lightning to the utmost ends of the earth; and the word "which began to be spoken by the Lord himself was confirmed by them that heard him; God also himself bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."[1] No such day hath been seen this many an age. Yet whithersoever the same gospel, for substance, comes, it also makes a day of the same kind, and affords always true, though diminished light; whereby, however, the things of our peace might be understood and known. The written gospel varies not: and if it be but simply and plainly proposed, though to some it be proposed with more advantage, to some with less, yet still we have the same things immediately relating to our peace extant before our eyes; and divers things besides, which it concerns us to be acquainted with, that we may the more distinctly, and to better purpose, understand these things. For instance,—

1. We have *the true and distinct state of the quarrel between God and us.* Pagans have understood somewhat of the apostasy of man from God;—that he is not in the same state wherein he was at first. But while they have understood that something was amiss,—they could scarce tell what,—the gospel reveals the universal pravity of the degenerate nature even of all men, and of every faculty in man: that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one;" and that every one is altogether become filthy and impure;[2]—that there is an entire "old man to be put off, wholly corrupt by deceivable lusts;"[3] that the ἀκρόπολις, the noblest powers, are

[1] Heb. ii. 3, 4. [2] Rom. iii. 12. [3] Eph. iv. 22.

vitiated, the mind and conscience defiled,—that the spirit of the mind needs renewing, is sunk into carnality; and that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, nor can be,"[1] nor capable of savouring the things of God; that the sinner is in the flesh, under the dominion and power and in the possession of the fleshly, sensual nature, and can therefore neither obey God nor enjoy Him,—that it is become impossible to him either to please God, or be pleased with Him: that the sinner's quarrel therefore with God is about the most appropriate rights of the Godhead; the controversy is—who shall be God? which is the supreme authority? and which is the supreme good? The formal peculiarity of the Godhead, the lapsed creature is become so insolent as to usurp and arrogate to himself. When he is become so much less than a man, a very beast, he will be a god. His sensual will shall be his only law. He lives and walks after the flesh, serves divers lusts and pleasures, and says, 'Who is lord over me?' But being conscious that he is not self-sufficient, that he must be beholden to somewhat foreign to himself for his satisfaction and finding nothing else suitable to his sensual inclination, that other divine peculiarity, to be the supreme good, he places upon the sensible world; and for this purpose *that* shall be his god: so that between himself and the world he attempts to share the undivided Godhead. This is a controversy of a high nature, and about other matters than even the Jewish rabbins thought of, who, when Jerusalem was destroyed, supposed God was angry with them for their neglect of the recitation of their phylacteries morning and evening; or that they were not respectful enough of one another; or that distance enough was not observed between superiors and inferiors, etc. The gospel impleads men as rebels against their rightful Lord; but of this treason against the Majesty of heaven men little suspect themselves till they are told. The gospel tells them so plainly, represents the matter

[1] Rom. viii. 7.

in so clear light, that they need only to contemplate themselves in that light, and they may see that so it is. Men may indeed, by resolved, stiff winking, create to themselves a darkness amidst the clearest light. But open thine eyes, man, thou that livest under the gospel, set thyself to view thine own soul,—thou wilt find it is day with thee. Thou hast a day by being under the gospel, and light enough to see that this is the posture of thy soul and the state of thy case Godward. And it is a great matter towards the understanding the things of thy peace, to know aright what is the true state of the quarrel between God and thee.

2. The gospel affords light to know what *the issue of this quarrel* is sure to be, if it go on and there be no reconciliation. It gives us other and plainer accounts of the punishments of the other world; more fully represents the extremity and perpetuity of the future miseries and state of perdition appointed for the ungodly world; speaks out concerning the "tophet prepared of old," "the lake of fire and brimstone;" —shows the miseries of that state to be the immediate effects of divine displeasure; that "the breath of the Almighty," as a "river of brimstone," always foments those flames; that "indignation and wrath" cause the "tribulation and anguish" which must be the portion of evil-doers; and how "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God;"[1]—gives us to understand what accession men's own unaltered, vicious habits will have to their miseries,—their own outrageous lusts and passions, which here they made it their business to satisfy, becoming their insatiable tormentors; that they are to receive the *things done* in the body according to what they have done, and that what they have sowed, *the same* also they are to reap; and what their own guilty reflections will contribute,—the bitings and gnawings of the worm that dies not, the venomous corrosions of the viper bred in their own bosoms and now become a full-grown serpent; what the society and insultation of devils, with

[1] Isa. xxx. 33; Rev. xxi. 8; Rom. ii. 8, 9; Heb. x. 31.

whom they are to partake in woes and torments, and by whom they have been seduced and trained into that cursed partnership and communion; and that this fire wherein they are to be tormented together, is to be everlasting,—a fire never to be quenched. If men be left to their own conjectures only, touching the danger they incur by continuing and keeping up a war with heaven; and are to make their own hell, and that it be the creature only of their own imagination,—it is like they will make it as easy and favourable as they can; and so are little likely to be urged earnestly to sue for peace by the imagination of a tolerable hell. But if they understand it to be altogether intolerable, this may make them bestir themselves and think the favour of God worth the seeking. The gospel imports favour and kindness to you, when it imports most of terror, in telling you so plainly the worst of your case if you go on in a sinful course. It makes you "a day," by which you may make a truer judgment of the blackness, darkness, and horror of that everlasting night that is coming on upon you; and lets you know that black and endless night is introduced by a terrible preceding day,—that "day of the Lord," the business whereof is judgment. They that live under the gospel cannot pretend they are in darkness, so "as that day should overtake them as a thief;" and that, by surprise, they should be doomed and abandoned to the regions of darkness. The gospel forewarns you plainly of all this; which it does, not merely to fright and torment you before the time, but that you may steer your course another way, and escape the place and state of torment. It only says this, that it may render the more acceptable to you what it hath to say besides; and only threatens you with these things, if there be no reconciliation between God and you. But then, at the same time,—

3. It also represents God to you as *reconcilable through a Mediator*. In that gospel, "peace is preached to you by Jesus Christ." That gospel lets you see "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that sin may not be imputed to them." That gospel proclaims "glory to God in

the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." So did the voices of angels sum up the glad tidings of the gospel, when that Prince of peace was born into the world. It tells you, "God desires not the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live;" that "he will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth;" that "he is long-suffering towards them, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" that "he so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The rest of the world cannot but collect, from darker intimations, God's favourable propensions towards them. He spares them, is patient towards them, that herein his "goodness might lead them to repentance." He sustains them, lets them dwell in a world which they might understand was of his making, and whereof he is absolute Lord. They "live, move, and have their being in him," that they might seek after him, and by feeling find him out. He "doth them good, gives them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." He lets his sun shine on them, whose far-extended beams show forth his kindness and benignity to men, even to the utmost ends of the earth; for there is no speech or language whither his line and circle reaches not. But those are but dull and glimmering beams in comparison of those that shine from the Sun of righteousness through the gospel revelation, and in respect of that Divine glory which appears in the face of Jesus Christ. How clearly doth the light of this gospel-day reveal God's design of reducing sinners and reconciling them to himself by a Redeemer! How canst thou but say, sinner, thou hast a day of it, and clear day-light showing thee what "the good and acceptable will of God" towards thee is? Thou art not left to guess only thou mayst be reconciled and find mercy, and to grope and feel thy way in the dark,—unless it be a darkness of thy own making. And whereas a sinner,—a disloyal, rebellious creature, that hath affronted the Majesty of heaven, and engaged against himself

the wrath and justice of his Maker, and is unable to make him any recompense,—can have no reason to hope God will show him mercy, and be reconciled to him for his own sake or for anything he can do to oblige or induce Him to it, the same gospel shows you plainly it is for the Redeemer's sake, and what he hath done and suffered to procure it. But inasmuch also as the sinner may easily apprehend that it can never answer the necessities of his state and case, that God only be not his enemy, that he forbear hostilities towards him, pursue him not with vengeance to his destruction;—for he finds himself *an indigent creature,* and he needs somewhat beyond what he hath ever yet met with to make him happy,—that it is uneasy and grievous to wander up and down with craving desires among varieties of objects that look speciously, but which either he cannot so far compass as to make a trial what there is in them, or wherewith, upon trial, he finds himself mocked and disappointed, and that really they have nothing in them; he finds himself *a mortal creature,* and considers that if he had all that he can covet in this world, the increase of his present enjoyments doth but increase unto him trouble and anguish of heart, while he thinks what great things he must shortly leave and lose for ever, to go he knows not whither, into darksome, gloomy regions, where he cannot so much as imagine anything suitable to his inclinations and desires,—for he knows all that is delectable to his present sense he must here leave behind him, and he cannot divest himself of all apprehensions of a future state, wherein if God should make him suffer nothing, yet, if he have nothing to enjoy, he must be *always* miserable:—therefore,

4. The gospel further represents to him *the final, eternal blessedness and glorious state,* which they that are reconciled shall be brought into. They that live under the gospel are not mocked with shadows and empty clouds, or with fabulous elysiums. Nor are they put off with some unintelligible notion of only being happy in the general; but are told expressly wherein their happiness is to consist.

"Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel." It is given them to understand how great a good is laid up in store. "The things which eye hath not seen, and ear not heard, and which otherwise could not have entered into the heart of man," the things of God's present and eternal kingdom, are set in view. It shows the future state of the reconciled shall consist not only in freedom from what is evil, but in the enjoyment of the best and most delectable good; that God Himself in all his glorious fulness will be their eternal and most satisfying portion; that their blessedness is to lie in the perpetual fruitive vision of his blessed face, and in the fulness of joy and the everlasting pleasures which the Divine presence itself doth perpetually afford. And whereas their glorious Redeemer is so nearly allied to them, flesh of their flesh,—who "inasmuch as the children were made partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same,"[1]—and is become by special title their authorized Lord, they are assured of that than which nothing should be more grateful to them,—"they shall be for ever with the Lord;" that they are to be where he is, to behold his glory; and shall be joint-heirs with Christ, and be glorified together with him; shall partake, according to their measure and capacity, in the same blessedness which he enjoys. Thou canst not pretend, sinner, who livest under the gospel, that thou hast not the light of the day to show thee what blessedness is. Heaven is opened to thee. Glory beams down from thence upon thee, to create thee a day by the light whereof thou mayst see with sufficient clearness what is the inheritance of the saints in light. And though all is not told thee, and it do not in every respect appear what we shall be, so much may be foreknown, that "when he shall appear we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is."[2] And because the heart, as yet carnal, can savour little of all this; and finding itself strange and disaffected to God, affecting now to be without Christ and without God in the world, may easily apprehend it impossible to it to be happy

[1] Heb. ii. 14. [2] 1 John iii. 2.

in an undesired good, or that it can enjoy what it dislikes, or, in the meantime, walk in a way to which it finds in itself nothing but utter averseness and disinclination,—

5. The gospel further shows us *what is to be wrought and done in us to attemper and frame our spirits to our future state and present way to it.* It lets us know we are to be "born again," born from above, "born of God," "made partakers of a divine nature," that will make the temper of our spirits connatural to the Divine presence;—that whereas "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," we, "who were darkness, shall be made light in the Lord;" that we are to be "begotten again to a lively hope, to the eternal and undefiled inheritance that is reserved in the heavens for us;" that we are thus to be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;"—and as we are to be eternally conversant with Christ, we are here "to put on Christ," to have Christ in us the "hope of glory;"—and whereas only the way of holiness and obedience leads to blessedness, that we are "to be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, to walk in them;" and shall thereupon find the ways prescribed to us by Him who is the Wisdom of God, to be all ways of pleasantness and paths of peace; that he will put his Spirit into us, and cause us to walk in his statutes and to account that "in keeping of them there is great reward." And thus all that is contained in that mentioned summary of the things belonging to our peace, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," will all become easy to us and as the acts of nature, proceeding from that new and holy nature imparted to us.

And whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, canst thou deny that it is day with thee, as to all this? Wast thou never told of this great necessary heart-change? Didst thou never hear that the tree must be made good, that the fruit might be good; that thou must become a new creature, have old things done away and all things made new? Didst thou never hear of the necessity of having a new heart and a right spirit created and renewed in thee; that except thou wert

"born again," (or "from above," as that expression may be read,) thou couldst never enter into the kingdom of God? Wast thou kept in ignorance, that a form of godliness without the power of it would never do thee good; that a name to live without the principle of the holy, divine life, would never save thee; that a specious outside, that all thy external performances, while thou wentest with an unrenewed, earthly, carnal heart, would never advantage thee as to thy eternal salvation and blessedness? And this might help thine understanding concerning the nature of thy future blessedness, and will be found most agreeable to it, being aright understood: for as thou art not to be blessed by a blessedness without thee and distant from thee, but inwrought into thy temper and intimately united with thee; nor glorified by an external glory, but by a glory revealed within thee; so nor canst thou be qualified for that blessed, glorious state otherwise than by having the temper of thy soul made habitually holy and good. As what "a good man" partakes of happiness here, is such that he is "satisfied from himself;" so it must be hereafter, not originally from himself, but by divine communication made most intimate to him. Didst thou not know that it belonged to thy peace to have a peace-maker; and that the Son of God was he; and that he makes not the peace of those that despise and refuse him, or that receive him not, that come not to him, and are not willing to come to God by him? Couldst thou think, living under the gospel, that the reconciliation between God and thee was not to be mutual; that he would be reconciled to thee while thou wouldst not be reconciled to him, or shouldst still bear towards him a disaffected, implacable heart? For couldst thou be so void of all understanding as not to apprehend what the gospel was sent to thee for, or why it was necessary to be preached to thee, or that thou shouldst hear it? Who was to be reconciled by a gospel preached to thee but thyself? Who was to be persuaded by a gospel sent to thee,—God or thou? Who is to be persuaded but the unwilling? The gospel, as thou hast been told, reveals God willing to be reconciled, and

thereupon beseeches thee to be reconciled to him. Or could it seem likely to thee thou couldst ever be reconciled to God, and continue unreconciled to thy Reconciler? To what purpose is there a daysman, a middle person between God and thee, if thou wilt not meet him in that middle person? Dost thou not know that Christ avails thee nothing if thou still stand at a distance with him, if thou dost not unite and adjoin thyself to him, or art not in him? And dost thou not again know that Divine power and grace must unite thee to him; and that a work must be wrought and done upon thy soul by an almighty hand, by God himself, a mighty transforming work, to make thee capable of that union; that whosoever is in Christ is "a new creature;"[1] that thou must be of God in Christ Jesus, who then is made unto thee of God also, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;"[2] every way answering the exigency of thy case, as thou art a foolish, guilty, impure, and enslaved or lost creature? Didst thou never hear that none can come to Christ but whom the Father draws; and that he draws the reasonable souls of men not violently or against their wills;—he draws, yet drags them not, but makes them willing in the day of power, by giving a new nature and new inclinations to them? It is sure with thee not dark night, not a dubious twilight, but broad day as to all this.

'Yes,' perhaps thou mayst say, 'but this makes my case the worse, not the better, for it gives me at length to understand that what is necessary to my peace and welfare is impossible to me, and so the light of my day doth but serve to let me see myself miserable and undone, and that I have nothing to do to relieve and help myself.' I therefore add,—

6. That by being under the gospel, men have not only light to understand whatsoever is any way necessary to their peace, but *opportunity to obtain that communication of Divine power and grace* whereby to comply with the terms of it. Whereupon, if this be made good, you have not a pretence left you to say your case is the worse or that you receive any

[1] 2 Cor. v. 17. [2] 1 Cor. i. 30.

prejudice, by what the gospel reveals of your own impotency to relieve and help yourselves; or determines touching the terms of your peace and salvation, making such things necessary thereto as are to you impossible and out of your own present power; unless it be a prejudice to you not to have your pride gratified, and that God hath pitched upon such a method for your salvation as shall wholly turn to the praise of the glory of his grace, or that you are to be "*of him* in Christ Jesus"—"that whosoever glorieth might glory in the Lord."[1] Is it for a sinner that hath deserved and is ready to perish, to insist upon being saved with reputation; or to envy the great God, upon whose pleasure it wholly depends whether he shall be saved or not saved, the entire glory of saving him? For otherwise, excepting the mere business of glory and reputation, is it not all one to you, whether you have the power in your own hands of changing your hearts, of being the authors to yourselves of that holy, new nature out of which actual faith and repentance are to spring, or whether you may have it from the God of all grace, flowing to you from its own proper, divine fountain? Your case is not, sure, really the worse that your salvation from first to last is to be all of grace and that it is impossible to you to repent and believe, while it is not *simply* impossible, but that He can effectually enable you thereto, "unto whom all things are possible;" supposing that he will,—whereof by and by. Nay, and it is more glorious and honourable even to you,—if you understand yourselves,—that your case is so stated as it is. The gospel indeed plainly tells you that your repentance must be given you. Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." And so must your faith, and that frame of spirit which is the principle of all good works: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in

[1] 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

them."[1] Is it more glorious to have nothing in you but what is self-sprung, than to have your souls the seat and receptacle of divine communications, of so excellent things as could have no other than a heavenly original? If it were not absurd and impossible you should be self-begotten, is it not much more glorious to be born of God? as they are said to be that receive Christ: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[2]

And now, that by being under the gospel you have the opportunity of getting that grace which is necessary to your peace and salvation, you may see, if you consider what the gospel is, and was designed for. It is the ministration of the Spirit; that Spirit by which you are to be born again.[3] The work of regeneration consists in the impregnating, and making lively and efficacious in you, the holy truths contained in the gospel: "Of his own good-will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures:"[4] and again, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God."[5] So our Saviour prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."[6] The gospel is upon this account called "the word of life;"[7] as by which the principles of that Divine and holy life are implanted in the soul whereby we live to God, do what his gospel requires and hath made our duty, and that ends at length in eternal life. But you will say, 'Shall *all* then that live under the gospel obtain this grace and holy life? Or, if they shall not, or if, so far as can be collected, multitudes do not, or perhaps in some places that enjoy the gospel, very few do in comparison of them that do not, what am I better; when perhaps it is far more likely that I shall perish, notwithstanding, than be saved?'

[1] Eph. ii. 8—10. [2] John i. 12, 13. [3] John iii. 3, 5, 6.
[4] Jas. i. 18. [5] 1 Pet. i. 23. [6] John xvii. 17.
[7] Phil. ii. 16.

In answer to this, it must be acknowledged that all that live under the gospel do not obtain life and saving grace by it. For then there had been no occasion for this lamentation of our blessed Lord over the perishing inhabitants of Jerusalem, as having "lost their day," and that "the things of their peace were now hid from their eyes." And by that instance it appears too possible that even the generality of a people living under the gospel may fall at length into the like forlorn and hopeless condition. But art thou a man that thus objectest,—a reasonable, understanding creature? or dost thou use the reason and understanding of a man in objecting thus? Didst thou expect that when thine own wilful transgression had made thee liable to eternal death and wrath,—peace, and life, and salvation, should be imposed upon thee whether thou wouldst or no, or notwithstanding thy most wilful neglect and contempt of them, and all the means of them? Could it enter into thy mind that a reasonable soul should be wrought and framed for that high and blessed end whereof it is radically capable, as a stock or a stone is for any use it is designed for, without designing its own end or way to it? Couldst thou think the gospel was to bring thee to faith and repentance whether thou didst hear it or no, or ever apply thy mind to consider the meaning of it and what it did propose and offer to thee? Or when thou mightst so easily understand that the grace of God was necessary to make it effectual to thee, and that it might become his power, or the instrument of his power, to thy salvation, couldst thou think it concerned thee not to sue and supplicate to him for that grace, when thy life lay upon it, and thy eternal hope? Hast thou lain weltering at the footstool of the throne of grace in thine own tears, as thou hast been formerly weltering in thy sins and impurities, crying for grace to help thee in this time of thy need? And if thou thinkest this was above thee and without thy compass, hast thou done all that was within thy compass in order to the obtaining of grace at God's hands?

But here perhaps thou wilt inquire, 'Is there anything

then to be done by us, whereupon the grace of God may be expected certainly to follow?' To which I answer,—

(1.) That it is out of question nothing can be done by us to deserve it, or *for which* we may expect it to follow. It were not grace, if we had obliged or brought it, by our desert, under former preventive bonds to us. And,—

(2.) What if nothing can be done by us *upon which* it may be *certainly* expected to follow? Is a certainty of perishing better than a high probability of being saved?

(3.) Such as live under the gospel have reason to apprehend it highly probable they may obtain that grace which is necessary to their salvation, if they be not wanting to themselves. For,—

(4.) There is generally afforded to such that which is wont to be called common grace. I speak not of any further extent of it; it is enough to our present purpose that it extends so far as to them that live under the gospel, and have thereby a day allowed them wherein to provide for their peace. Now, though this grace is not yet certainly saving, yet it tends to that which is so. And none have cause to despair, but that, being duly improved and complied with, it may end in it.

And this is that which requires to be insisted on and more fully evinced. In order whereto let it be considered, that it is expressly said to such, they are to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling," for this reason, that "God worketh" (or "is working," ἔστιν ὁ ἐνεργῶν) "in them,"—that is, statedly and continually at work, or is always ready to work in them,—"to will and to do of his own good pleasure."[1] The matter fails not on his part. He will work on in order to their salvation, if they work in that way of subordinate co-operation which his command and the necessity of their own case oblige them unto. And it is further to be considered, that where God had formerly afforded the symbols of his gracious presence, given his oracles, and settled his church, though yet in its nonage and much more imperfect

[1] Phil. ii. 12, 13.

state, there he however communicated those influences of his Spirit, that it was to be imputed to themselves if they came short of the saving operations of it. Of such it was said, "Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them;"[1] and to such, "Turn you at my reproof: I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity,"[2] etc. We see whence their destruction came,—not from God's first restraint of his Spirit, but their refusing, despising, and setting at nought his counsels and reproofs. And when it is said, "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them,"[3] it appears that before his Spirit was not withheld, but did variously and often make essays and attempts upon them. And when Stephen, immediately before his martyrdom, thus bespeaks the descendants of these Jews, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye,"[4] it is implied the Holy Ghost had been always striving from age to age with that stubborn people; for where there is no counter-striving there can be no resistance, no more than there can be a war on one side only; which also appears to have been the course of God's dealing with the old world, before their so general lapse into idolatry and sensual wickedness, from that passage,[5] according to the more common reading and sense of those words.

Now whereas the gospel is eminently said to be the ministration of the Spirit, in contradistinction not only to the natural religion of other nations, but the divinely instituted religion of the Jews also, (as is largely discoursed, 2 Cor. iii., and more largely through the epistle to the Galatians, especially chap. iv.;) and whereas we find, that in the Jewish church the Holy Ghost did generally diffuse its influences,

[1] Neh. ix. 20. [2] Prov. i. 23—26. [3] Isa. lxiii. 10.
[4] Acts vii. 51. [5] Gen. vi. 3.

and not otherwise withhold them than penally and upon great provocation; how much more may it be concluded, that under the gospel the same blessed Spirit is very generally at work upon the souls of men, till, by their resisting, grieving, and quenching of it, they provoke it to retire and withdraw from them!

And let the consciences of men living under the gospel testify in the case. Appeal, sinner, to thine own conscience. Hast thou never felt anything of conviction by the word of God? Hadst thou never any thought injected of turning to God, of reforming thy life, of making thy peace? Have no desires ever been raised in thee, no fears? Hast thou never had any tastes and relishes of pleasure in the things of God? Whence have these come? What! from thyself, who art not sufficient to think anything as of thyself,—that is, not any good or right thought? All must be from that good Spirit that hath been striving with thee, and might still have been so unto a blessed issue for thy soul, if thou hadst not neglected and disobeyed it.

And do not go about to excuse thyself by saying, that so all others have done too, (it is like,) at one time or other; and if *that*, therefore, be the rule and measure, that they that contend against the strivings and motions of God's Spirit must be finally deserted and given up to perish, who then can be saved? Think not of pleading so for thy neglecting and despising the grace and Spirit of God. It is true that herein the great God shows his sovereignty: when all that enjoy the same advantages for salvation deserve, by their slighting them, to be forsaken alike, he gives instances and makes examples of just severity and of the victorious power of grace, as seems him good; which there will be further occasion to speak more of hereafter. In the meantime, the present design is not to justify thy condemnation, but procure thy salvation, and therefore to admonish and instruct thee, that, though thou art not sure, because some others that have slighted and despised the grace and Spirit of God are notwithstanding conquered and saved thereby, it

shall therefore fare as well with thee; yet thou hast reason to be confident it will be well and happy for thee, if *now* thou despise and slight them not. And whether thou do or do not, it is, however, plain that by thy being under the gospel thou hast had a day wherein to mind the things of thy peace, though it is not told thee it would last always; but the contrary is presently to be told thee.

And thou mayst now see it is not only a day in respect of *light*, but *influence* also; that thou mightst not only know notionally what belonged thereto, but efficaciously and practically,—which you have heard is the knowledge here meant. And the concurrence of such light and influence has made thee a season wherein thou wast to have been at work for thy soul. The day is the proper season for work; when the night comes, working ceases, both because that then light fails and because drowsiness and sloth are more apt to possess men. And the night will come; for—which is the next thing we are to speak to,—

III. This day hath its *bounds and limits;* so that when it is over and lost with such, "the things of their peace are for ever hid from their eyes." And that this day is not infinite and endless, we see in the present instance. Jerusalem had her day; but that day had its period: we see it comes to this at last, that *now* the things of her peace are hid from her eyes. We generally see the same thing in that sinners are so earnestly pressed to make use of the present time: "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart;"[1]—quoted and urged, Heb. iii. 7, 8. They are admonished to "seek the Lord while he may be found," to "call upon him while he is near."[2] It seems, some time he will not be found, and will be afar off. They are told, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."[3]

This *day*, with any place or people, supposes a precedent *night*, when the day-spring from on high had not visited their horizon, and all within it sat in darkness and in the

[1] Ps. xcv. 7, 8. [2] Isa. lv. 6. [3] Isa. xlix. 8; 2 Cor. vi. 2.

region and shadow of death. Yea, and there was a time, we know, of very general darkness, when the gospel-day, the day of visitation, had not yet dawned upon the world; "times of ignorance," wherein God, as it were, "winked" upon the nations of the earth;—the beams of his eye did, in a sort, overshoot them, as the word ὑπεριδὼν imports. But when the eyelids of the morning open upon any people and light shines to them with direct beams, they are "*now* commanded to repent;"[1]—limited to the present point of time, with such peremptoriness as that noble Roman used towards a proud prince, asking time to deliberate upon the proposal made to him of withdrawing his forces that molested some of the allies of that state; he draws a line about him with the end of his rod, and requires him now, out of hand, before he stirred out of that circle, to make his choice, whether he would be a friend or enemy to the people of Rome. So are sinners to understand the state of their own case. The God of thy life, sinner, in whose hands thy times are, doth, with much higher right, limit thee to the present time and expects thy present answer to his just and merciful offers and demands. He circumscribes thy day of grace; it is enclosed on both parts and hath an evening as well as morning; as it had a foregoing so it hath a subsequent night; and the latter, if not more dark, yet usually much more stormy than the former: for God shuts up this day in much displeasure,—which hath terrible effects. If it be not expressly told you what the condition of that night is that follows your gospel day; if the watchman, being asked, "What of the night?" do only answer, "It cometh as well as the morning came;" black events are signified by that more awful silence. Or it is all one if you call it *a day;* there is enough to distinguish it from the *day of grace.* The Scriptures call such a calamitous season indifferently either by the name of night or day; but the latter name is used with some or other adjunct, to signify "day" is not meant in the pleasant or more grateful sense;—a "day of wrath," an "evil day," "a day

[1] Acts xvii. 30.

of gloominess and thick darkness," not differing from the most dismal night; and to be told the morning of such a day is coming, is all one as that the evening is coming of a bright and a serene day.

And here, perhaps, reader, thou wilt expect to be told what are the limits of this day of grace. It is indeed much more difficult punctually to assign those limits, than to ascertain thee there are such; but it is also less necessary. The wise and merciful God doth, in matters of this nature, little mind to gratify our curiosity; much less is it to be expected from him that he should make known to us such things whereof it were better we were ignorant or the knowledge whereof would be much more a prejudice to us than an advantage. And it were as bold and rash an undertaking in this case, as it would be vain and insignificant, for any man to take upon him to say in it what God hath not said, or given him plain ground for. What I conceive to be plain and useful in this matter I shall lay down in the following propositions, insisting more largely where the matter requires it, and contenting myself but to mention what is obvious and clear at the first sight:—

1. That there is a great difference between the ends and limits of the day or season of grace as to *particular persons*, and in reference to the collective body of a people inhabiting this or that place. It may be over with such or such a place, so as that they that dwell there shall no longer have the gospel among them, when as yet it may not be over with every particular person belonging to it, who may be providentially cast elsewhere, or may have the "ingrafted word" in them, which they lose not. And again; it may be over with some particular persons in such a place, when it is not yet over with that people or place generally considered.

2. As to both, there is a difference between the *ending* of such a day, and *intermissions* or *dark intervals*, that may be in it. The gospel may be withdrawn from such a people and be restored. And God often, no doubt, as to particular persons, either deprives them of the outward means of grace

for a time by sickness or many other ways, or may for a time forbear moving upon them by his Spirit, and again try them with both.

3. As to particular persons, there may be much difference between *such as* while they lived under the gospel *gained the knowledge of the principal doctrines*, or of the sum or substance of Christianity, though without any sanctifying effect or impression upon their hearts; and *such as through their own negligence lived under it in total ignorance hereof.* The day of grace may not be over with the former, though they should never live under the ministry of the gospel more. For it is possible, while they have the seeds and principles of holy truth laid up in their minds, God may graciously administer to them many occasions of recollecting and considering them, wherewith he may so please to co-operate as to enliven them and make them vital and effectual to their final salvation. Whereas, with the other sort, when they no more enjoy the external means, the day of grace is like to be quite over, so as that there may be no more hope in their case than in that of Pagans in the darkest parts of the world; and perhaps much less, as their guilt hath been much greater by their neglect of so great and important things. It may be "better with Tyre and Sidon," etc.

4. That yet it is a terrible judgment to the *most knowing*, to lose the external dispensation of the gospel while they have yet no sanctifying impression upon their hearts by it; and they are cast upon a fearful hazard of being lost for ever, being left by the departed gospel in an unconverted state. For they need the most urgent inculcations of gospel truths, and the most powerful enforcing means, to engage them to consider the things which they know. It is the design of the gospel to beget not only *light* in the mind, but *grace* in the heart; and if that were not done while they enjoyed such means, it is less likely to be done without them. And if any slighter and more superficial impressions were made upon them thereby, short of true and thorough conversion, how great is the danger that all will vanish when

they cease to be pressed, and urged, and called upon by the public voice of the gospel ministry any more! How naturally desident is the spirit of man, and apt to sink into deadness, worldliness, and carnality, even under the most lively and quickening means and even where a saving work hath been wrought; how much more when those means fail, and there is no vital principle within capable of self-excitation and improvement! O that they would consider this, who have got nothing by the gospel all this while but a little cold, spiritless, notional knowledge, and are in a possibility of losing it before they get anything more!

5. That as it is certain death ends the day of grace with every unconverted person, so it is very possible *it may end with divers before they die;* by their total loss of all external means, or by the departure of the blessed Spirit of God from them so as to return and visit them no more. How the day of grace may end with a person, is to be understood by considering what it is that makes up and constitutes such a day. There must be some measure and proportion of time to make up this, or any day, which is as the *substratum* and ground forelaid. Then there must be light superadded, otherwise it differs not from night, which may have the same measure of mere time. The gospel-revelation, some way or other, must be had, as being the light of such a day. And again, there must be some degree of liveliness and vital influence, the more usual concomitant of light; the night doth more dispose men to drowsiness. The same sun that enlightens the world disseminates also an invigorating influence. If the Spirit of the living God do no way animate the gospel-revelation and breathe in it, we have no day of grace. It is not only a day of light, but a day of power, wherein souls can be wrought upon and a people made willing to become the Lord's.[1] As the Redeemer revealed in the gospel is the "light of the world," so he is "life" to it too; though neither are planted or do take root everywhere: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." That

[1] Ps. cx. 3.

light that rays from him is vital light in itself and in its tendency and design, though it be disliked and not entertained by the most.

Whereas, therefore, these things must concur to make up such a day, if either a *man's time*—his life on earth—expire, or if *light* quite fail him, or if all *gracious influence* be withheld, so as to be communicated no more,—his day is done, the season of grace is over with him. Now it is plain that many a one may lose the gospel before his life end; and possible that all gracious influence may be restrained, while as yet the external dispensation of the gospel remains. A sinner may have hardened his heart to that degree that God will attempt him no more in any kind, with any design of kindness to him; not in that more inward, immediate way at all, that is, by the motions of his Spirit, which peculiarly can import nothing but friendly inclination, as whereby men are *personally* applied unto so that another cannot be meant; nor by the voice of the gospel, which may either be continued for the sake of others, or they continued under it but for their heavier doom at length; which, though it may seem severe, is not to be thought strange, much less unrighteous.

It is not to be thought strange to them that read the Bible, which so often speaks this sense, as when it warns and threatens men with so much terror: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath *done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*"[1] And when it tells us, after many overtures made to men in vain, of his having given them up, etc.:

[1] Heb. x. 26—29.

"But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me: so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels;"[1] and pronounces, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still;"[2] and says, "In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee;"[3]—which passages seem to imply a total desertion of them, and retraction of all gracious influence;—and when it speaks of letting them be under the gospel, and the ordinary means of salvation, for the most direful purposes; as that, "This child" (Jesus) "was set for the fall," as well as "for the rising, of many in Israel."[4] As to which text the very learned Grotius, glossing upon the words,[5] says, that 'he is of their opinion who think that not the naked event, but the counsel or purpose of God, is signified by it,'[6]—the same with τίθεται: and alleges several texts where the active of that verb must have the same sense as to appoint or ordain; and mentions divers other places of the same import with this so understood, and which, therefore, to recite will equally serve our present purpose; as that, "Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence;"[7] and, "The stone which the builders refused, is made a . . . stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed;"[8] with that of our Saviour himself, "For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind;"[9] and most agreeable to those former places is that of the prophet, "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be

[1] Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12. [2] Rev. xxii. 11. [3] Ezek. xxiv. 13.
[4] Luke ii. 34. [5] κεῖται and εἰς πτῶσίν.
[6] 'Accedo iis qui non nudum eventum, sed et consilium,' etc.
[7] Rom. ix. 33. [8] 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. [9] John ix. 39.

broken, and snared, and taken."[1] And we may add, that our Lord hath put us out of doubt that there is such a sin as that which is eminently called "the sin against the Holy Ghost;"—that a man may, in such circumstances and to such a degree, sin against that blessed Spirit, that he will never move or breathe upon them more, but leave them to a hopeless ruin;—though I shall not, in this discourse, determine or discuss the nature of it. But I doubt not it is somewhat else than *final impenitency and infidelity;* and that every one that dies, not having sincerely repented and believed, is not guilty of it,—though every one that is guilty of it dies impenitent and unbelieving; but was guilty of it before, so as it is not the mere want of time that makes him guilty. Whereupon, therefore, that such may outlive their day of grace, is out of question.

But let not such as, upon the descriptions the gospel gives us of that sin, may be justly confident they have not perhaps committed it, therefore think themselves out of danger of losing their season of making their peace with God before they die. Many a one *may*, no doubt, that never committed the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as he is the witness, by his wonderful works, of Christ being the Messiah; as one may die by neglecting himself, that doth not poison himself or cut his own throat. You will say, 'But if the Spirit retire from men, so as never to return, where is the difference?' I answer, The difference lies in the *specific nature* and greater heinousness of that sin, and consequently in the deeper degrees of its punishment. For though the reason of its unpardonableness lies not principally in its greater heinousness, but in its direct repugnancy to the way of obtaining pardon, yet there is no doubt of its being much more heinous than many other sins for which men perish; and, therefore, it is in proportion more severely punished. But is it not misery enough to dwell in darkness and woe for ever, as every one that dies unreconciled to God

[1] Isa. xxviii. 13.

must do, unless the most intense flames and horror of hell be your portion? as his case is sufficiently bad that must die as an ordinary felon, though he is not to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

Nor is there any place or pretence for so profane a thought, as if there were any colour of unrighteousness in this course of procedure with such men. Is it unjust severity to let the gospel become deadly to them, whose malignity perverts it against its nature and genuine tendency, into "a savour of death," as 2 Cor. ii. 16, which it is "to them that perish,"[1] —that is, to them, as the mentioned author speaks, who may be truly said to seek their own destruction? or that God should intend their more aggravated condemnation, even from the despised gospel itself, who, when such light is come into the world, hate it, show themselves (as he also phrases it, speaking further upon that first mentioned text),—*such as fly from the light, choose and love to lurk in darkness?*[2] He must have very low thoughts of Divine favour, and acceptance of Christ and grace and glory, that can have hard thoughts of God, for his vindicating with greatest severity the contempt of such things. What could better become his glorious majesty and excellent greatness, than, as "all things work together for good towards them that love him," so to let all things work for the hurt of them that so irreconcilably hate him and bear a disaffected and implacable mind towards him? Nor doth the addition of his *designing the matter so*, make it hard. For if it be just to *punish* such wickedness, is it unjust to *intend to punish* it? and to intend to punish it according to its desert, when it cannot be thought unjust actually to render to men what they deserve?

We are, indeed, to account the primary intention of continuing the gospel to such a people, among whom these live, is kindness towards others, not this higher revenge upon them; yet nothing hinders but that this revenge upon them may also be the fit matter of his secondary intention. For should he intend nothing concerning them? Is he to be so uncon-

[1] τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις. [2] "Lucifugæ, tenebriones."

cerned about his own creatures, that are under his government? While things cannot fall out to him unawares, but that he hath this dismal event in prospect before him, he must at least intend to let it be, or not to hinder it. And who can expect he should? For that his gracious influence towards them should at length cease, is above all exception; that it ceasing, while they live still under the gospel, they contract deeper guilt and incur heavier punishment, follows of course. And who could say he should not intend to let it follow? For should he take away the gospel from the rest, that these might be less punished? that others might not be saved, because they will not?

Nor can he be obliged to interpose extraordinarily and alter for their sakes the course of nature and providence, so as either to hasten them the sooner out of the world, or cast them into any other part of it where the gospel is not, lest they should, by living still under it, be obnoxious to the severer punishment. For whither would this lead? He should, by equal reason, have been obliged to prevent men's sinning at all, that they might not be liable to any punishment; and so not to have made the world, or have otherwise framed the methods of his government, and less suitably to a whole community of reasonable creatures: or to have made an end of the world long ago and have quitted all his great designs in it, lest some should sin on and incur proportionable punishment: or to have provided extraordinarily that all should do and fare alike; and that it might never have come to pass that it should be less tolerable for Capernaum and Chorazin and Bethsaida, than for Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom and Gomorrah. "But is there unrighteousness with God?" or is he "unrighteous in taking vengeance?" or is he therefore unjust, because he "will render to every one according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that

doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile?"[1] Doth righteousness itself make him unrighteous? O sinner, understand how much better it is to avoid the stroke of Divine justice than accuse it! God will be found true, and every man a liar, that he may be "justified when he speaks and be clear when he judges."[2]

6. Yet are we not to imagine any *certain fixed rule, according whereto* (except in the case of the unpardonable sin) *the Divine dispensation is measured in cases of this nature;* namely, that when a sinner hath contended just so long or to such a degree against his grace and Spirit in his gospel, he shall be finally rejected; or if but so long or not to such a degree, he is yet certainly to be further tried or treated with. It is little to be doubted but he puts forth the power of victorious grace at length upon some more obstinate and obdurate sinners, and that have longer persisted in their rebellions (not having sinned the unpardonable sin), and gives over some sooner, as it seems good unto him. Nor doth he herein owe an account to any man of his matters. Here sovereign good pleasure rules and arbitrates, that is tied to no certain rule. Neither, in these variations, is there any show of that blamable προσωπολημψία or "accepting of persons," which in his own word he so expressly disclaims. We must distinguish matters of *right,* (even such as are so by promise only, as well as others,) and matters of *mere unpromised favour.* In matters of right, to be an accepter of persons, is a thing most highly culpable with men and which can have no place with the holy God; that is, when a human judge hath his rule before him, according whereto he is to estimate men's rights in judgment, there to regard the person of the rich or of the poor to the prejudice of the justice of the cause, were an insufferable iniquity; as it were also in a private person to withhold another's right because he hath no kindness for him. So even the great God himself, though of mere grace he first fixed and established the rule—fitly therefore called the covenant or law of grace—by which he will proceed in pardoning and justifying men or in condemning and holding

[1] Rom. ii. 6—9. [2] Ps. li. 4.

them guilty, both here and in the final judgment; yet having fixed it, he will never recede from it, so as either to acquit an impenitent unbeliever or condemn a believing penitent: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive." None shall be ever able to accuse him of breach of faith or of transgressing his own rules of justice. We find it, therefore, said in reference to the judgment of the last day, when God shall "render to every man according to his works," whether they be Jews or Gentiles, that "there is no respect of persons with God;"[1] yet whereas he hath, by his evangelical law, ascertained pardon to one that sincerely obeys it, but hath not promised grace to enable them to do so,[2]—to them that have long continued wilfully disobedient and rebellious, this communication of grace is therefore left arbitrary, and to be dispensed as the matter of free and unassured favour, as it seems him good. And indeed, if in matters of arbitrary favour respect of persons ought to have no place, friendship were quite excluded the world and would be swallowed up of strict and rigid justice; I ought to take all men for my friends alike, otherwise than as justice should oblige me to be more respectful to men of more merit.

7. Wherefore *no man can certainly know or ought to conclude, concerning himself or others, as long as they live, that the season of grace is quite over with them.* As we can conceive no rule God hath set to himself to proceed by in ordinary cases of this nature, so nor is there any he hath set us to judge by in this case. It were to no purpose and could be of no use to men, to know so much; therefore it were unreasonable to expect God should have settled and declared any rule by which they might come by the knowledge of it. As the case is then,—namely, *there being no such rule*,—no such thing can be concluded; for who can tell what an arbitrary, sovereign, free agent will do, if he declare not his own purpose himself? How should it be known, when the Spirit of God hath been often working upon the soul of a man, that this or that shall be the last act and that he will never put

[1] Rom. ii. 6—11.

[2] "Qui promisit pœnitenti veniam, non promisit peccanti pœnitentiam."

forth another? And why should God make it known? To the person himself whose case it is, it is manifest it could be no benefit. Nor is it to be thought the holy God will ever so alter the course of his own proceedings, but that it shall finally be seen to all the world that every man's destruction was, entirely and to the last, of himself. If God had made it evident to a man that he were finally rejected, he were obliged to believe it. But shall it ever be said God hath made anything a man's duty which were inconsistent with his felicity? The having sinned himself into such a condition wherein he is forsaken of God, is indeed inconsistent with it; and so the case is to stand,—that is, that his perdition be in immediate connection with his sin, not with his duty; as it would be in immediate, necessary connection with his duty, if he were bound to believe himself finally forsaken, and a lost creature. For that belief makes him hopeless, and a very devil; justifies his unbelief of the gospel towards himself, by removing and shutting up towards him the object of such a faith; and consequently brings the matter to this state, that he perishes, not because *he does not believe God reconcilable to man*, but because, with particular application to himself, *he ought not so to believe*.[1]

And it were most unfit, and of very pernicious consequence, that such a thing should be generally known concerning others. It were to anticipate the final judgment, to create a hell upon earth, to tempt them, whose doom were already known, to do all the mischief in the world which malice and despair can suggest and prompt them unto; it were to mingle devils with men and fill the world with confusion! How should parents know how to behave themselves towards children, a husband towards the wife of his bosom, in such a case, if it were known they were no more to counsel, exhort, admonish them, pray with or for them than if they were devils?

And *if there were such a rule*, how frequent misapplications would the fallible and distempered minds of men make of it! So that they would be apt to fancy themselves warranted

[1] See more to this purpose in the Appendix.

to judge severely or uncharitably, and, as the truth of the case perhaps is, unjustly, concerning others,—from which they are so hardly withheld when they have no such pretence to embolden them to it, but are so strictly forbidden it; and the judgment-seat so fenced, as it is, by the most awful interdicts against their usurpation and encroachments. We are, therefore, to reverence the wisdom of the Divine government, that things of this nature are among the arcana of it,—some of those secrets "which belong not to us." He hath "revealed" what was fit and necessary "for us and our children," and envies to man no useful knowledge.

But it may be said, when the apostle directs to "pray for a brother whom we see sinning a sin that is not unto death,"[1] and adds, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say he shall pray for it," 'Is it not implied that it may be known when one sins that sin unto death, not only to himself, but even to others too?' I answer, It is implied there may be too probable appearances of it and much ground to suspect and fear it concerning some, in some cases: as when any, against the highest evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and that Jesus is the Christ or the Messiah, (the proper and most sufficiently credible testimony whereof he had mentioned in the foregoing verses, under heads to which the whole evidence of the truth of Christianity may be fitly enough reduced,) do, notwithstanding, from that malice which blinds their understanding, persist in infidelity, or apostatize and relapse into it from a former profession,—there is great cause of suspicion lest such have sinned that sin unto death. Whereupon yet it is to be observed, he doth not expressly forbid praying for the persons whose case we may doubt, only he doth not enjoin it, as he doth for others, but only says, "I do not say he shall pray for it;"—that is, that in his present direction to pray for others, he did not intend such; but another sort for whom they might pray remotely from any such suspicion: namely, that he meant *now* such praying as ought to be interchanged between Christian friends, that have reason in the

[1] 1 John v. 16.

main to be well persuaded concerning one another; in the meantime intending no opposition to what is elsewhere enjoined,—the praying for "all men,"[1] without the personal exclusion of any: as also our Lord himself prayed indefinitely for his most malicious enemies, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Though he had formerly said there was such a sin as should never be forgiven, whereof it is highly probable some of them were guilty, yet such he doth not expressly except; but his prayer being in the indefinite, not the universal form, it is to be supposed it must mean *such as were within the compass and reach of prayer*, and capable of benefit by it. Nor doth the apostle here direct personally to exclude any, only that indefinitely and in the general such must be supposed not meant as had sinned the sin unto death; or must be conditionally excluded if they had, without determining who had or had not. To which purpose it is very observable, that a more abstract form of expression is used in this latter clause of this verse: for whereas in the former, *positive* part of the direction, he enjoins praying for him or them that had not sinned unto death, namely, concerning whom there was no ground for any such imagination or suspicion that they had; in the *negative* part, concerning such as might have sinned it, he doth not say "for him" or "them," but "for it,"—that is, concerning, in reference to it; as if he had said, 'The case in general only is to be excepted; and if persons are to be distinguished,—since every sin is some one's sin, the sin of some person or other,—let God distinguish, but do not you; it is enough for you to except the sin, committed by whomsoever.' And though the former part of the verse speaks of a particular person,—"If a man see his brother sin a sin that is not unto death," which is as determinate to a person as the sight of our eye can be,—it doth not follow the latter part must suppose a like particular determination of any person's case, that he hath sinned it. I may have great reason to be confident such and such have not, when I can

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 1.

only suspect that such a one hath. And it is a thing much less unlikely to be certain to one's self than another; for they that have sinned unto death are no doubt so blinded and stupified by it, that they are not more apt or competent to observe themselves and consider their case than others may be.

8. But though none ought to conclude that their day or season of grace is quite expired, yet *they ought deeply to apprehend the danger lest it should expire* before their necessary work be done and their peace made: for though it can be of no use to them to know the former, and therefore they have no means appointed them by which to know it, it is of great use to apprehend the latter, and they have sufficient ground for the apprehension. All the cautions and warnings wherewith the Holy Scripture abounds, of the kind with those already mentioned, have that manifest design. And nothing can be more important, or apposite to this purpose, than that solemn charge of the great apostle, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;"[1] considered together with the subjoined ground of it, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."[2] How correspondent is the one with the other! *Work*, for *he works*. There were no working at all to any purpose or with any hope, if he did not work: and work with *fear and trembling*, for he works of his *own good pleasure:* as much as to say, it were the greatest folly imaginable to trifle with one that works at so perfect liberty, under no obligation, that may desist when he will; to impose upon so absolutely sovereign and arbitrary an agent, that owes you nothing; and from whose former gracious operations, not complied with, you can draw no argument unto any following ones,—that because he doth, therefore he will. As there is no certain connection between present time and future, but all time is made up of undepending, not strictly coherent, moments, so as no man can be sure because one now exists, another shall; there is also no more certain connection between the arbi-

[1] Phil. ii. 12. [2] Ver. 13.

trary acts of a free agent within such time; so that I cannot be sure, because he now darts in light upon me, is now convincing me, now awakening me, therefore he will still do so again and again. Upon this ground then, what exhortation could be more proper than this, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?" What could be more awfully monitory and enforcing of it, than that he works only of mere good-will and pleasure? How should I tremble to think, 'If I should be negligent or undutiful, he may give out the next moment, and let the work fall and me perish!' And there is more especial cause for such an apprehension, upon the concurrence of such things as these:—

(1.) If the workings of God's Spirit upon the soul of a man have been more than ordinarily strong and urgent, and do now cease; if there have been more powerful convictions, deeper humiliations, more awakened fears, more formed purposes of a new life, more fervent desires, that are now all vanished and fled, and the sinner is returned to his old dead and dull temper:

(2.) If there be no disposition to reflect and consider the difference, no sense of his loss; but he apprehends such workings of spirit in him unnecessary troubles to him, and thinks it well he is delivered and eased of them:

(3.) If in the time when he was under such workings of spirit, he had made known his case to his minister or any godly friend, whose company he now shuns, as not willing to be put in mind or hear any more of such matters:

(4.) If hereupon he hath more indulged sensual inclination, taken more liberty, gone against the checks of his own conscience, broken former good resolutions, involved himself in the guilt of any grosser sins:

(5.) If conscience, so baffled, be now silent, lets him alone, grows more sluggish and weaker; which it must, as his lusts grow stronger:

(6.) If the same lively, powerful ministry, which before affected him much, now moves him not:

(7.) If, especially, he is grown into a dislike of such

preaching; if serious godliness and what tends to it are become distasteful to him; if discourses of God and Christ, of death and judgment, and of a holy life, are reckoned superfluous and needless, are unsavoury and disrelished; if he have learned to put disgraceful names upon things of this import and the persons that most value them and live accordingly; if he hath taken "the seat of the scorner," and makes it his business to deride what he had once a reverence for or took some complacency in:

(8.) If, upon all this, God withdraw such a ministry, so that he is now warned and admonished, exhorted and striven with as formerly, no more,—O the fearful danger of that man's case! Hath he no cause to fear lest the things of his peace should be for ever hid from his eyes? Surely he hath much cause of fear, but not of despair. Fear would in this case be his great duty and might yet prove the means of saving him; despair would be his very heinous and destroying sin. If yet he would be stirred up to consider his case, whence he is fallen and whither he is falling, and set himself to serious seeking of God, cast down himself before him, abase himself, cry for mercy as for his life, there is yet hope in his case; God may make here an instance what he can obtain of himself to do for a perishing wretch! But,—

IV. *If with any that have lived under the gospel, their day is quite expired, and the things of their peace now for ever hid from their eyes, this is in itself a most deplorable case, and much lamented by our Lord Jesus himself.*—That the case is in itself most deplorable, who sees not? A soul lost! A creature capable of God, upon its way to him, near to the kingdom of God—shipwrecked in the port! O sinner, from how high a hope art thou fallen; into what depths of misery and woe!

And that it was lamented by our Lord, is in the text. He "beheld the city,"—very generally, we have reason to apprehend, inhabited by such wretched creatures,—"and wept over it." This was a very affectionate lamentation. We lament often, very heartily, many a sad case, for which we do not shed tears. But tears,—such tears,—falling from such eyes,

—the issues of the purest and best-governed passion that ever was,—showed *the true greatness of the cause.* Here could be no exorbitancy or unjust excess, nothing more than was proportionable to the occasion. There needs no other proof that this is a sad case, than that our Lord lamented it with tears; which that he did we are plainly told, so that touching that there is no place for doubt. All that is liable to question is, whether we are to conceive in him any like resentments of such cases in his present glorified state?

Indeed we cannot think heaven a place or state of sadness or lamentation; and must take heed of conceiving anything there, *especially on the throne of glory,* unsuitable to the most perfect nature and the most glorious state. We are not to imagine tears there, which in that happy region are wiped away from inferior eyes; no grief, sorrow, or sighing, which are all fled away and shall be no more, as there can be no other turbid passion of any kind. But when expressions that import anger or grief are used, even concerning God himself, we must sever in our conception everything of imperfection and ascribe everything of real perfection. We are not to think such expressions signify nothing; that they have no meaning or that nothing at all is to be attributed to him under them.

Nor are we, again, to think they signify the same thing with what we find in ourselves and are wont to express by those names. In the Divine nature, there may be real and yet most serene complacency and displacency,—namely, that are unaccompanied with the least commotion, and import nothing of imperfection, but perfection rather; as it is a perfection to apprehend things suitably to what in themselves they are. The Holy Scriptures frequently speak of God as angry and grieved for the sins of men, and their miseries which ensue therefrom; and a real aversion and dislike is signified thereby, and by many other expressions which in us would signify vehement agitations of affection that we are sure can have no place in him. We ought, therefore, in our own thoughts, to ascribe to him that calm aversion of

will in reference to the sins and miseries of men in general; and in our own apprehensions to remove to the utmost distance from him all such agitations of passion or affection; even though some expressions that occur carry a great appearance thereof, should they be understood according to human measures, as they are human forms of speech: as, —to instance in what is said by the glorious God himself, and very near in sense to what we have in the text,—what can be more pathetic than that lamenting wish, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!"[1]

But we must take heed lest, under the pretence that we cannot ascribe everything to God that such expressions seem to import, we therefore ascribe nothing. We ascribe nothing, if we do not ascribe to him a real unwillingness that men should sin on and perish; and consequently, a real willingness that they should turn to him and live, which so many plain texts assert. And therefore it is unavoidably imposed upon us, to believe that God is truly unwilling of some things, which he doth not think fit to interpose his omnipotency to hinder, and is truly willing of some things which he doth not put forth his omnipotency to effect: that he most fitly makes this the ordinary course of his dispensations towards men,—to govern them by laws, and promises, and threatenings, (made most express to them that live under the gospel,) to work upon their minds, their hope and their fear; affording them the ordinary assistances of supernatural light and influence with which he requires them to comply, and which, upon their refusing to do so, he may most righteously withhold, and give them the victory to their own ruin; though oftentimes he doth, from a *sovereignty of grace*, put forth that greater power upon others, equally negligent and obstinate, not to enforce, but effectually to incline, their wills, and gain a victory over them to their salvation.

Nor is his will towards the rest altogether ineffectual,

[1] Ps. lxxxi. 13.

though it have not this effect. For whosoever thou art that livest under the gospel, though thou dost not know that God so wills thy conversion and salvation as to effect it whatsoever resistance thou now makest; though thou art not sure he will finally overcome all thy resistance and pluck thee as a firebrand out of the mouth of hell; yet thou canst not say his good-will towards thee hath been without any effect at all tending thereto. He hath often called upon thee in his gospel to repent and turn to him through Christ; he hath waited on thee with long patience, and given thee time and space of repentance; he hath within that time been often at work with thy soul. Hath he not many times let in beams of light upon thee, shown thee the evil of thy ways, convinced thee, awakened thee, half persuaded thee? And thou never hadst reason to doubt but that, if thou hadst set thyself with serious diligence "to work out thy own salvation," he would have wrought on, so as to have brought things to a blessed issue for thy soul.

Thou mightst discern his mind towards thee to be agreeable to his word, wherein he hath testified to thee he desired not the death of sinners, that he "hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," or in the death of the wicked, "but that he should turn and live;" exhorted thee; expostulated with thee and others in thy condition, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" He hath told thee expressly thy stubbornness and contending against him did "grieve" him, and "vex his Spirit;" that thy sin wherein thou hast indulged thyself hath been "an abomination to him," that it was "the abominable thing which his soul hated," —that he was "broken with the whorish heart" of such as thou, and "pressed therewith as a cart that was full of sheaves."

Now, such expressions as these, though they are borrowed from man, must be understood suitably to God; though they do not signify the same thing with him as they do in us, yet they do not signify nothing. As, when hands and eyes are attributed to God, they do not signify as they do with

us, yet they signify somewhat correspondent,—as active and visive power; so these expressions, though they signify not in God such unquiet motions and passions as they would in us, they do signify a mind and will really, though with the most perfect calmness and tranquillity, set against sin and the horrid consequences of it; which yet, for greater reasons than we can understand, he may not see fit to do all he can to prevent. And if we know not how to reconcile such a will in God with some of our notions concerning the Divine nature, shall we, for what we have thought of him, deny what he hath so expressly said of himself or pretend to understand his nature better than he himself doth?[1]

And when we see, from such express sayings in Scripture (reduced to a sense becoming God), how God's mind stands in reference to sinners and their self-destroying ways, we may thence apprehend what temper of mind our Lord Jesus also bears towards them in the like case, even in his glorified state. For can you think there is a disagreement between him and the Father about these things? And whereas we find our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, one while complaining men "would not come to him that they might have life;"[2] elsewhere grieved at the "hardness of their hearts;"[3] and here scattering tears over sinning and perishing Jerusalem,—we cannot doubt but that—the innocent perturbation which his earthly state did admit being severed —his mind is still the same in reference to cases of the same nature; for can we think there is any disagreement between him and himself? We cannot therefore doubt but that,—

1. He *distinctly comprehends the truth of any such case.* He beholds from the throne of his glory above, all the treaties which are held and managed with sinners in his name, and what their deportments are therein. "His eyes are as a flame of fire," wherewith he "searcheth hearts and trieth reins." He hath seen, therefore, sinner, all along, every time an offer of grace hath been made to thee, and been rejected; when thou hast slighted counsels and warnings

[1] See the Appendix. [2] John v. 40. [3] Mark iii. 5.

that have been given thee, exhortations and entreaties that have been pressed upon thee, for many years together; and how thou hast hardened thy heart against reproofs and threatenings, against promises and allurements; and beholds the tendency of all this, what is like to come of it,—and that, if thou persist, it will be bitterness in the end.

2. That *he hath a real dislike of the sinfulness of thy course.* It is not indifferent to him whether thou obeyest or disobeyest the gospel,—whether thou turn and repent, or no; that he is truly displeased at thy trifling, sloth, negligence, impenitency, hardness of heart, stubborn obstinacy and contempt of his grace; and takes real offence at them.

3. He hath *real kind propensions towards thee,* and is ready to receive thy returning soul, and effectually to mediate with the offended Majesty of heaven for thee as long as there is any hope in thy case.

4. *When he sees there is no hope, he pities thee,* while thou seest it not, and dost not pity thyself. Pity and mercy above are not names only; it is a great reality that is signified by them, and that hath place there in far higher excellency and perfection than it can with us poor mortals here below. Ours is but borrowed and participated from that first fountain and original above. Thou dost not perish unlamented, even with the purest heavenly pity, though thou hast made thy case incapable of remedy: as the well-tempered judge bewails the sad end of the malefactor, whom justice obliges him not to spare or save.

USE.—And now let us consider what *use* is to be made of all this. And though nothing can be useful to the persons themselves whom the Redeemer thus laments as lost, yet that he doth so may be of great use to others; which will partly concern *those who do justly apprehend this is not their case;* and partly such *as may be in great fear that it is:*—

First, For such as have reason to persuade themselves it is *not their case.* The best ground upon which any can confidently conclude this is, that they have in this their

present day, through the grace of God, already effectually known the things of their peace; such, namely, as have sincerely, with all their hearts and souls, turned to God, taken him to be their God, and devoted themselves to him, to be his; intrusting and subjecting themselves to the saving mercy and governing power of the Redeemer, according to the tenor of the gospel-covenant; from which they do not find their hearts to swerve or decline, but resolve through Divine assistance to persevere herein all their days.

Now for such as with whom things are already brought to that comfortable conclusion, I only say to them;—

1. Rejoice and bless God that so it is. Christ your Redeemer rejoices with you and over you; you may collect it from his contrary resentment of their case who are past hope,—if he weep over them, he no doubt rejoices over you. There is joy in heaven concerning you. Angels rejoice,—your glorious Redeemer presiding in the joyful concert. And should not you rejoice for yourselves? Consider what a discrimination is made in your case! To how many hath that gospel been a deadly savour, which hath proved "a savour of life unto life" to you! How many have fallen on your right hand and your left, stumbling "at the stone of offence" which to you is become the "head-stone of the corner, elect and precious!" Whence is this difference? Did you never slight Christ? never make light of offered mercy? Was your mind never blind or vain? Was your heart never hard or dead? Were the terms of peace and reconciliation never rejected or disregarded by you? How should you admire victorious grace, that would never desist from striving with you till it had overcome! You are the triumph of the Redeemer's conquering love, who might have been of his wrath and justice! Endeavour your spirits may taste more and more the sweetness of reconciliation, that you may more abound in joy and praises. Is it not pleasant to you to be at peace with God; to find that all controversies are taken up between him and you; that you can now approach him, and his terrors not make you afraid; that

you can enter into the secret of his presence and solace yourselves in his assured favour and love? How should you "joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement!" What have you now to fear: "If, when you were enemies, you were reconciled by the death of Christ, how much more, being reconciled, shall you be saved by his life?" How great a thing have you to oppose to all worldly troubles: "If God be for you, who can be against you?" Think how mean it is for the friends of God, the favourites of heaven, to be dismayed at the appearances of danger that threaten them from the inhabitants of the earth? What if all the world were in a posture of hostility against you, when the mighty Lord of all is your friend? Take heed of thinking meanly of his power and love! Would any one diminish to himself whom he takes for his God? "All people will walk every one in the name of his god;" why should not you much more in the name of yours, glorying in him and making your boasts of him all the day long? O the reproach which is cast upon the glorious name of the great God, by their diffidence and despondency who visibly stand in special relation to him, but fear the impotent malice of mortal man more than they can trust in his almighty love! If indeed you are "justified by faith and have peace with God," it becomes you so "to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" as also to "glory in tribulation," and tell all the world that in his favour stands your life, and that you care not who is displeased with you for the things wherewith you have reason to apprehend he is pleased.

2. Demean yourselves with that care, caution, and dutifulness, that become a state of reconciliation. Bethink yourselves that your present peace and friendship with God is not original, and continued from thence, but hath been interrupted and broken; that your peace is not that of constantly innocent persons. You stand not in this good and happy state because you never offended, but as being reconciled, and who therefore were once enemies. And when you were

brought to know, in that your "day" which you have enjoyed, the "things belonging to your peace," you were made to feel the smart and taste the bitterness of your having been "alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works." When the terrors of God did beset you round, and his arrows stuck fast in you, did you not then find trouble and sorrow? Were you not in a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation to consume and burn you up as adversaries? Would you not then have given all the world for a peaceful word or look, for any glimmering hope of peace? How wary and afraid should you be of a new breach! How should you study acceptable deportments, and to walk "worthy of God, unto all well-pleasing!" How strictly careful should you be to keep faith with him, and abide "stedfast in his covenant!" How concerned for his interest, and in what agonies of spirit when you behold the eruptions of enmity against him from any others,—not from any distrust, or fear of final prejudice to his interest, but from the apprehension of the unrighteousness of the thing itself and a dutiful love to his name, throne, and government! How zealous should you be to draw in others! How fervent in your endeavours, within your own sphere, and how large in your desires, extended as far as the sphere of the universe, that "every knee might bow to him, and every tongue confess" to him! They ought to be more deeply concerned for his righteous cause, that remember they were once most unrighteously engaged against it; and ought, besides, to be filled with compassion towards the souls of men yet in an unreconciled state, as having known, by "the terrors of the Lord," and remembering the experienced dismalness and horror of that state,—what it was to have divine wrath and justice armed against you with almighty power, and to have heard the thunder of such a voice, "I lift up my hand to heaven, and say I live for ever; if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will recompense fury to mine adversaries, vengeance to mine enemies." Do you not know what the case

is like to be, when "potsherds," that should "strive but with the potsherds of the earth," venture to oppose themselves as antagonists to Omnipotency? And when "briers and thorns set themselves" in battle array "against a consuming fire," how easily it can pass through, and devour, and burn them up together! And how much more fearful is their condition that know it not, but are ready to "rush like the horse into the battle!" Do you owe no duty, no pity to them that have the same nature with you, and with whom your case was once the same? If you do indeed know the "things of your peace" Godward, so as to have made your peace, to have come to an agreement, and struck a covenant with him; you have now taken his side, are of his confederates,—not as equals, but subjects. You have sworn allegiance to him, and associated yourself with all them that have done so. There can hereupon be but one common interest to him and you. Hence, therefore, you are most strictly obliged to wish well to that interest, and promote it to your uttermost, in *his own way;* that is, according to his openly avowed inclination and design, and the genuine constitution of that kingdom which he hath erected and is intent to enlarge and extend farther in the world. *That*, you do well know, *is a kingdom of grace;* for his natural kingdom already confines with the universe, and can have no enlargement, without enlarging the creation. Whosoever they are that contend against him, are not merely enemies, therefore, but rebels. And you see he aims to conquer them by love and goodness, and therefore treats with them, and seeks to establish a kingdom over them, in and by a Mediator; who, if he were not intent upon the same design, had never lamented the destruction of any of them, and wept over their ruin, as here you find. So, therefore, should you long for the conversion of souls, and the enlargement of his kingdom this way, both out of loyalty to him and compassion towards them.

Secondly, For such as may be in great fear lest this *prove to be their case*. They are either such as *may* fear it, but do not; or such as *are* deeply afflicted with this actual fear:—

1. For the former sort, who are in too great danger of bringing themselves into this dreadful, deplorate condition, but apprehend nothing of it; all that is to be said to them, apart by themselves, is only to awaken them out of their drowsy, dangerous slumber and security; and then they will be capable of being spoken to together with the other sort. Let me, therefore,—

(1.) Demand of you, Do you believe there is a Lord over you,—yea or no? *Use your thoughts;* for, about matters that concern you less, *you can think.* Do you not apprehend you have an invisible Owner and Ruler, that rightfully claims to himself an interest in you and a governing power over you? How came you into being? You know you made not yourselves. And if you yet look no higher than to progenitors of your own kind—mortal men, as you are—how came *they* into being? You have so much understanding about you, if you would use it, as to know they could none of them make themselves, more than you, and that, therefore, the human race must have had its beginning from some superior Maker. And did not he that made them make you and all things else? Where are your arguments to prove it was otherwise, and that this world and all the generations of men took beginning of themselves, without a wise and mighty Creator? Produce your strong reasons, upon which you will venture your souls and all the possibilities of your being happy or miserable, to eternity! Will your imagination make you safe, and protect you against his wrath and justice, whose authority you will not own? Can you, by it, uncreate your Creator and nullify the eternal Being? Or have you anything else besides your own blind imagination, to make you confident that all things came of nothing, without any maker? But if you know not how to think this reasonable, and apprehend you must allow yourselves to owe your being to an almighty Creator, let me,—

(2.) Ask of you how you think your life is maintained. Doth not he that made you live, keep you alive? Whereas

you have often heard that we all "live, and move, and have our beings in him," doth it not seem most likely to you to be so? Have you power of your own life? Do you think you can live as long as you will? At least, do you not find you need the common helps of meat and drink, and air and clothing, for the support and comfort of your lives? And are not all these his creatures as well as you? And can you have them whether he will or no?

(3.) And how can you think that he that made and maintains you, hath no right to rule you? If it were possible any one should as much depend upon you, would you not claim such power over him? Can you suppose yourself to be under no obligation to please him who hath done so much for you, and to do his will, if you can any way know it?

(4.) And can you pretend you have no means to know it? That book that goes up and down under the name of his word, can you disprove it to be his word? If such writings should now first come into the world, so sincere, so awful, so holy, so heavenly; bearing so expressly the Divine image, avowing themselves to be from God,—and the most wonderful works are wrought to prove them his word, the deaf made to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the sick healed, the dead raised, by a word only commanding it to be so; would you not confess this to be sufficient evidence that this revelation came from heaven? And are you not sufficiently assured they are so confirmed? Do you find in yourselves any inclination to cheat your children in anything that concerns their well-being? Why should you more suspect your forefathers' design to cheat you, in the mere reporting falsely a matter of fact? Was not human nature the same so many hundred years ago? Did ever the enemies of the Christian name in the earlier days of Christianity, when it was but a novelty in the world and as much hated and endeavoured to be rooted out as ever any profession was, deny such matters of fact? Have not some of the most spiteful of them confessed it? Did not Christians then willingly sacrifice their lives by multitudes, upon the assured

truth of these things? Have they not been ever since most strictly careful to preserve these writings and transmit them, as wherein the all of themselves and their posterity was contained? And where is now your new light? Where are your later discoveries, upon which, so many ages after, you are able to evict these writings of falsehood or dare venture to disbelieve them?

(5.) But if you believe these writings to be Divine, how expressly is it told you in them what the state of your case is Godward, and what he requires of you! You may see you have displeased him and how you are to please him, as hath been shown before in this discourse. You know that you have lived in the world mindless and inobservant of him; not trusting, fearing, loving, or delighting in him; declining his acquaintance and converse; seeking your own pleasure, following your inclination, doing your own will as if you were supreme, never minding to refer your actions to his precepts as your rule or to his glory as your end. And from that word of his you may understand all this to be very displeasing to him; and that you can never please him by continuing this course, but by breaking it off, and returning to him as your Lord and your God;—that since your case did need a Redeemer and Reconciler, and he hath provided and appointed one for you, you are to apply yourselves to him, to commit and subject your souls to him, to trust in his merits and blood, and submit to his authority and government. And,—

(6.) Are you not *continually called* hereto by the gospel, under which you have lived all this while? So that you are in actual, continual rebellion against him all the while you comply not with this call; every breath you draw is rebellious breath. There is no moment wherein this lies not upon you, by every moment's addition to your time. And that patience of his which adds by moments to your life, and should lead you to repentance, is, while you repent not, perverted by you only to the treasuring up of "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

(7.) And do you not find, as his word also plainly tells you, a great averseness and disinclination in you to any such serious, solemn applying yourself to him and your Redeemer? Try your own hearts; do you not find them draw back and recoil? If you urge them, do they not still fly off? How loth are you to retire, and set yourselves to consider your case, and unto serious seeking of God in Christ; both from a reluctancy and indisposition to any such employment as this is itself, and from disaffection to that whereto it tends,—the breaking off your former sinful course of life and entering upon a better. And does not all this show you the plain truth of what the word of God hath told you, that the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin or the leopard his spots, as they do good who are accustomed to do evil;[1] that you have a heart that cannot repent,[2] till God give you "repentance unto life;"[3] that you cannot come to Christ till the Father draw you?[4] Do you not see your case then,—that you must perish if you have not help from heaven? if God do not give you *his grace* to overcome and cure the averseness and malignity of *your nature*, that things are likely thus to run on with you as they have, from day to day and from year to year; and you, that are unwilling to take the course that is necessary for your salvation to-day, are likely to be as unwilling to-morrow, and so your lives consume in vanity till you drop into perdition? But,—

(8.) Dost thou not also know, sinner,—what hath been so newly shown thee from God's word,—that, by thy being under the gospel, thou hast a day of grace; not only as offers of pardon and reconciliation are made to thee in it, but also as, through it, converting, heart-renewing grace is to be expected and may be had? that what is sufficient for the turning and changing of thy heart is usually not given all at once, but as gentler insinuations (the injection of some good thoughts and desires) are complied with, more powerful influences may be hoped to follow? that therefore thou art concerned,—upon any such thought cast into thy mind, of

[1] Jer. xiii. 23. [2] Rom. ii. 5. [3] Acts xi. 18. [4] John vi. 44.

going now to seek God for the life of thy soul,—to strive, thyself, against thy own disinclination; that if thou do not, but yield to it, and still defer, it may prove mortal to thee? For is it not plain to thee in itself and from what hath been said, that this day hath its limits and will come to an end? Dost thou not know thou art a mortal creature,—that thy breath is in thy nostrils? Dost thou know how near thou art to the end of thy life, and how few breaths there may be for thee between this present moment and eternity? Dost thou not know thy day of grace may end before thy life; that thou mayst be cast far enough out of the sound of the gospel; and if thou shouldst carry any notices of it with thee, thou who hast been so unapt to consider them while they were daily pressed upon thee, wilt most probably be less apt when thou hearest of no such thing? that thou mayst live still under the gospel, and the Spirit of grace retire from thee and never attempt thee more, for thy former despiting of it? for what obligation hast thou upon that blessed Spirit? or why shouldst thou think a Deity bound to attend upon thy triflings? And,—

(9.) If yet all this move not, consider what it will be *to die unreconciled to God!* Thou hast been his enemy; he hath made thee gracious offers of peace, waited long upon thee; thou hast made light of all. The matter must at length end either in reconciliation or vengeance! The former is not acceptable to thee;—art thou prepared for the latter? Canst thou sustain it? Is it not "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" Thou wilt not do him right,—he must then right himself upon thee. Dost thou think he cannot do it? canst thou doubt his power? Cast thine eyes about thee,—behold the greatness, as far as thou canst, of this creation of his, whereof thou art but a very little part. He who hath made that sun over thine head and stretched out those spacious heavens, who hath furnished them with those innumerable bright stars, who governs all their motions, who hath "hung this earth upon nothing," who made and sustains that great variety of creatures that inhabit it,—can

he not deal with thee, a worm? "Can thine heart endure or thine hands be strong, if he plead with thee;" if he surround thee with his terrors and set them in battle array against thee? "Hell and destruction are open before him, and without covering;" how soon art thou cast in and engulfed! Sit down, and consider whether thou be able, with *thy impotency*, to stand before him that comes against thee with *almighty power!* Is it not better to sue in time for peace?

But perhaps thou mayst say, 'I begin now to fear it is too late; I have so long slighted the gospel, resisted the Holy Spirit of God, abused and baffled my own light and conscience, that I am afraid God will quite abandon me and cast me off for ever.' It is well if thou do indeed begin to fear. That fear gives hope. Thou art then capable of coming into their rank who are next to be spoken to, namely,—

2. Such as feel themselves afflicted with the apprehension and dread of their having outlived their day, and that the things of their peace are now irrecoverably hid from their eyes. I desire to counsel such faithfully, according to that light and guidance which the gospel of our Lord affords us in reference to any such case:—

(1.) *Take heed of stifling that fear suddenly;* but labour to improve it to some advantage, and then to cure and remove it by rational, evangelical means and methods. Do not, as thou lovest the life of thy soul, go about suddenly, or by undue means, to smother or extinguish it. It is too possible, when any such apprehension strikes into a man's mind,—because it is a sharp or piercing thought, disturbs his quiet, gives him molestation and some torture,—to pluck out the dart too soon, and cast it away. Perhaps such a course is taken as doth him unspeakably more mischief than a thousand such thoughts would ever do. He diverts, it may be, to vain company or to sensuality; talks or drinks away his trouble; makes death his cure of pain, and to avoid the fear of hell, leaps into it. Is this indeed the wisest course? Either

thy apprehension is reasonable or unreasonable. If it should prove a reasonable apprehension, as it is a terrible one, would the neglect of it become a reasonable creature, or mend thy case? If it shall be found unreasonable, it may require time and some debate to discover it to be so; whereby, when it is manifestly detected, with how much greater satisfaction is it laid aside! Labour, then, to inquire rightly concerning this matter.

(2.) In this inquiry, consider diligently *what the kind of that fear is that you find yourselves afflicted with.* The fear that perplexes your heart must some way correspond to the apprehension you have in your mind touching your case. Consider what that is, and in what form it shows itself there. Doth it appear in the form of a *peremptory judgment,* a definitive sentence which you have passed within yourself concerning your case, that your day is over, and you are a lost creature; or only of a *mere doubt* lest it should prove so? The fear that corresponds to the former of these makes you quite desperate, and obstinately resolute against any means for the bettering of your condition; the fear that answers to the latter apprehension, hath a mixture of hope in it, which admits of somewhat to be done for your relief and will prompt thereunto. Labour to discern which of these is the present temper and posture of your spirit.

(3.) If you find it be the former, let no thought any longer dwell in your mind *under that form;* namely, as a definitive sentence concerning your state. You have nothing to do to pass such a judgment; the tendency of it is dismal and horrid, as you may yourself perceive. And your ground for it is none at all. Your conscience within you is to do the office of a judge, but only of an under-judge, that is to proceed strictly by rule prescribed and set by the sovereign Lord and Arbiter of life and death. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Nor is your conscience, as an under-judge, to meddle at all but in cases within your cognizance. This about your final state is a reserved, excepted case, belonging only to the supreme tribunal, which you must take

heed how you usurp. As such a judgment tends to make you desperate, so there will be high presumption in this despair. Dare you take upon you to cancel and nullify to yourself the obligation of the evangelical law? and, whereas that makes it your duty to repent and believe the gospel, to absolve yourself from this bond, and say, 'it is none of your duty,' or make it impossible to you to do it? You have matter and cases enough within the cognizance of your conscience; not only the particular actions of your life, but your present state also, whether you be as yet in a state of acceptance with God through Christ, yea or no. And here you have rules set you to judge by. But concerning your final state, or that you shall never be brought into a state of acceptance, you have no rule by which you can make such a judgment; and therefore this judgment belongs not to you. Look then upon the matter of your final condition as an exempt case, reserved to the future judgment, and the present determination whereof against yourself is without your compass and line, and most unsuitable to the state of probation wherein you are to reckon God continues you here with the rest of men in this world; and therefore any such judgment you should tear and reverse, and, as such, not permit to have any place with you.

(4.) Yet since, as hath been said, you are not quite to reject or obliterate any apprehension or thought touching this subject, make it your business to correct and reduce it to that other form,—that is, let it only for the present remain with you *as a doubt* how your case now stands and what issue it may at length have. And see that your fear thereupon be answerable to your apprehension so rectified. While as yet it is not evident you have made your peace with God upon his known terms, you are to consider God hath left your case a doubtful case, and you are to conceive of it accordingly; and are to entertain a fear concerning it, not as certainly hopeless, but as uncertain. And as yours is really a doubtful case, it is a most important one. It concerns your souls and your eternal well-being, and is not therefore to be neglected or trifled with. You do not know how God will

deal with you; whether he will again afford you such help as he hath done, or whether ever he will effectually move your heart unto conversion and salvation. You, therefore, are to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling," because, as was told you, he works but "of his own good pleasure." Your fear should not exceed this state of your case, so as to exclude hope. It is of unspeakable concernment to you that hope do intermingle with your fear. *That* will do much to mollify and soften your hearts,—that after all the abuse of mercy and imposing upon the patience of God, your neglects and slights of a bleeding Saviour, your resisting and grieving the Spirit of grace, he may yet, once for all, visit your forlorn soul with his vital influence and save you from going down to perdition! How can your hearts but melt and break upon this apprehension! And it is not a groundless one. He that "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," will not fail to treat them well whom he sees beginning to listen to his call, and entertaining the thoughts that most directly tend to bring them to a compliance with it. Your hope, insinuating itself and mingling with your fear, is highly grateful to the God of all grace. He "taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."[1]

(5.) But see to it also that your fear *be not slight and momentary*, and that it vanish not while as yet it hath so great a work to do in you,—namely, to engage you to accept God's own terms of peace and reconciliation with all your heart and soul. It is of continual use, even not only in order to conversion, but to the converted also. Can you think those mentioned words[2] were spoken to none such? or those, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short?"[3] etc. And do we not find a holy fear is to contribute all along to the whole of progressive sanctification? "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,

[1] Ps. cxlvii. 11. [2] Phil. ii. 12, 13. [3] Heb. iv. 1.

perfecting holiness in the fear of God:"[1] and that by it he preserves his own, that they never depart from him?[2] Much more do you need it in your present case, while matters are yet in treaty between God and you. And as it should not exceed the true apprehension of your case, so nor should it come short of it:—

(6.) You should, therefore, in order hereto, *aggravate to yourselves the just causes of your fear.* Why are you afraid your day should be over and the things of your peace be for ever hid from your eyes? Is it not that you have sinned against much light, against many checks of your own consciences, against many very serious warnings and exhortations, many earnest, importunate beseechings and entreaties you have had in the ministry of the gospel, many motions and strivings of the Spirit of God thereby? Let your thoughts dwell upon these things. Think what it is for the great God, the Lord of glory, to have been slighted by a worm! Doth not this deserve as ill things at the hands of God as you can fear? It is fit you should apprehend what your desert is, though perhaps mercy may interpose, and avert the deserved dreadful event. And if he have signified his displeasure towards you hereupon, by desisting for the present, and ceasing to strive with you as he hath formerly done; if your heart be grown more cold and dead and hard than sometime it was; if you have been left so as to fall into grosser sin; it is highly reasonable you should fear being finally forsaken of the blessed Spirit of God, and greatly fear it; but with an *awful fear*, that may awaken you most earnestly to endeavour his return to you,—not with a *despairing fear*, that will bind you up from any further endeavour for your soul at all.

And if, upon all this, by death or otherwise, such a ministry be withdrawn from you as God did work by—in some degree—upon you, and you find not in that kind what is so suitable to your state and case, take heed lest you be stupid under such a stroke. Think what it imports unto you, if

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 1. [2] Jer. xxxii. 40.

God have, as it were, said concerning any servant of his, "I will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, that he shall not be a reprover to you any more!"[1] Consider that God *may* by this be making way that "wrath may come upon you to the uttermost," and never let you have opportunity to know more the things of your peace. Perhaps you may never meet with the man more that shall speak so accommodately to your condition, that shall so closely pursue you through all the haunts, and subterfuges, and lurking holes, wherein your guilty, convinced soul hath been wont to hide itself and falsely seek to heal its own wounds. One of more value may be less apt, possibly, to profit you; as a more polished key doth not therefore alike fit every lock. And thy case may be such, that thou shalt never hear a sermon or the voice of a preacher more.

(7.) And now in this case *recollect yourselves, what sins you have been formerly convinced of* under such a ministry, and which you have persisted in notwithstanding. Were you never convinced of your neglecting God and living as without him in the world; of your low esteem and disregard of Christ; of your worldliness, your minding only the things of this earth; of your carnality, pride, self-seeking, voluptuousness, your having been "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" of your unprofitableness in your station, wherein you ought to have lived more conformably to Christian rules and precepts, according to the relations wherein God had set you? Were you never convinced how very faulty governors you have been, or members of families, parents or masters, children or servants, etc.? What will this come to at last, that convictions have hitherto signified and served for nothing but increase of guilt!

(8.) Under all this weight and load of guilt, *consider what you have to do for your souls!* Bethink yourselves; are you to sit down and yield yourselves to perish? Consider, man, it is the business of thy soul and of thine eternal state that is now before thee. Thou hast the dreadful flaming gulf of

[1] Ezek. iii. 26.

everlasting horror and misery in view; hast thou nothing left thee to do but to throw thyself into it? Methinks thou shouldst sooner reconcile thy thoughts to anything than that; and that, if anything at all be to be done for thine escape, thou shouldst rather set thyself about it, and do it. Thou art yet alive, not yet in hell,—yet the patience of God spares thee, thou hast yet time to consider, thou hast the power to think yet left thee; and canst thou use it no other way than to think of perishing? Think rather how not to perish. A great point is gained, if thou art but brought to say, "What shall I do to be saved?" which doth imply thou dost both apprehend the distressedness of thy case, and art willing to do anything that is to be done for thy relief. And if thou art brought to this, thy circumstances may perhaps be such that thou canst only put this question to thyself and art only thyself to answer it, without a living, present guide; which may therefore make such a help as this needful to thee. Possibly some irresistible providence may have so cast thy lot, that thou art only now to be thy own preacher, though it sometime was otherwise with thee, and things were said to thee most suitable to the condition of thy soul which thou wouldst not then consider. It is yet pressed upon thee to *consider now*, with some design to direct thy thoughts that they run not into useless and troublesome confusion only. And your subject being, what course you are now to take that you may escape eternal wrath and ruin, it is obvious to you to apprehend nothing is to be done against or without God, but with him and by him; your utmost consideration can but bring the matter to this short point, that, whereas you have highly offended the God that made you, incurred his wrath, and made him your enemy, *you are* either to resist, or treat and supplicate. That madness which would let you intend *the former*, is not capable of consideration at all. For, if you consider, will you contend with omnipotency or fight with an all-devouring flame? And *as to the latter*, it is well for you that it can be the matter of your consideration, that you have any encouragement to turn your thoughts that way.

You might have enemies that, being provoked and having you in their power, would never admit of treaty, nor regard your supplications, but fall upon you with merciless fury, and leave you nothing to think of but perishing. Here it is not so with you. The merciful God hath graciously told you, "fury is not so in him," but that (though if briers and thorns will set themselves in battle against him, he will easily pass through, and burn them up together, yet) if any will "take hold of his strength, that they may make peace with him, they shall make peace with him."[1] You are to consider, there is danger in your case, and there is hope; that your sin is not so little as to need no forgiveness, nor too great to be forgiven. Wherefore, whose case soever this is, since you may be forgiven if you duly apply yourselves, and must be forgiven or you are undone, my further advice to you is,—and you may, as to this, advise yourself, having nothing else left you to do,—

(9.) That you cast yourselves down before the mercy-seat of God, *humble yourselves deeply at his footstool, turn to him with all your soul, implore his mercy through Christ; make a solemn covenant with him, taking him to be your God, and devoting yourself to him, to be his; accepting his Son as your Lord and Saviour, and resigning your soul with submission and trust entirely to him, to be ruled and saved by him.* That you are to do this the case is plain, and even speaks itself; how you are to do it, may need to be more particularly told you:—

i. Take heed that what you do in this be not the *mere effect of your present apprehended distress, but of the altered judgment and inclination of your mind and heart.* The apprehension of your distressed, dangerous condition may be a useful means and inducement to engage you more seriously to listen and attend to the proposals made to you in the gospel. But if upon all this, it should be the sense of your heart that you would rather live still as without God in the world, and that you would never come to any such treaty or agreement with him, if mere necessity and the fear of

[1] Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

perishing did not urge you to it, you are still but where you were. Therefore, though the feared danger was necessary to make you bethink yourself, and consider what God propounds to you; that consideration ought to have that further effect upon you, to convince you of the equity and desirableness of the things themselves which he propounds, summarily,—of your betaking yourselves to him as your sovereign Lord and supreme Good, to fear and love, obey and enjoy him, in Christ Jesus; and accordingly ought to incline your heart thereto.

ii. You are to consider, in your entering into this covenant with God in Christ, that it is not a transaction *for the present only* you are about, but *for your whole life*. "This God is to be your God for ever and ever; your God and your guide even to the death."[1] You are to live in his fear and love, in his service and communion, all your days; and must understand this to be the meaning and tenor of the covenant which you make with him.

iii. And hence therefore it is plain that your whole transaction in this matter must proceed from a *new nature*, and a new vital principle of grace and holiness in you. What you do herein will otherwise neither be sincere nor lasting. You can never embrace religion for itself without this, nor continue on in a religious course. What you do only from a temporary pang of fear upon you, is but from a kind of force that is for the present upon you, and will come to nothing as soon as the impression of that fear wears off. The religion which is true and durable is not from a "spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind."[2] You must be "a new creature, God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that you may walk in them." The life of the new creature stands in love to God; as its way and course afterwards is a course of walking with God. If your heart be not brought to love God and delight in him, you are still but dead towards God and you still remain alive unto sin, as before. Whereas, if you ever come to be a Christian indeed,

[1] Ps. xlviii. 14. [2] 2 Tim. i. 7.

you must be able truly to "reckon yourself dead to sin, and alive to God through Jesus Christ."[1] Whereupon, in your making the mentioned covenant, you must "yield yourself to God, as one that is alive from the dead;" as it is, verse 13 of the same chapter. A new nature and life in you will make all that you do in a way of duty,—whether immediately towards God or man,—the whole course of godliness, righteousness, and sobriety, easy and delightful to you. And because it is evident, both from many plain scriptures and your own and all men's experience, that you cannot be yourselves the authors of a new life and nature, you must therefore further, in entering into this covenant,—

iv. *Most earnestly cry to God, and plead with him for his Spirit,* by whom the vital unitive bond must be contracted between God in Christ and your souls. So this will be the covenant of life and peace. Lord, how generally do the Christians of our age deceive themselves with a self-sprung religion; divine, indeed, in the institution, but merely human in respect of the radication and exercise; in which respects also it must be divine or nothing. What! are we yet to learn that a Divine power must work and form our religion in us, as well as Divine authority direct and enjoin it? Do all such scriptures go for nothing that tell us, it is God that must create the new heart and renew the right spirit within us; that he must turn us, if ever we be turned; that we can never come to Christ, except the Father draw us, etc.? Nor is there any cause of discouragement in this, if you consider what hath before been said in this discourse: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Your heavenly Father will give his Spirit to them that ask, more readily than parents do bread to their children, and not a stone. But what if you be put to ask often and wait long? this doth but the more endear the gift and show the high value of it. You are to remember how often you have grieved, resisted, and vexed this Spirit, and that you have made God wait long upon you.

[1] Rom. vi. 11.

What if the absolute, sovereign Lord of all expect your attendance upon him? He waits to be gracious—and blessed are they that wait for him. Renew your applications to him. Lay from time to time that covenant before you, which yourselves must be wrought up unto a full, entire closure with. And if it be not done at one time, try yet if it will another, and try again and again. Remember it is for your life, for your soul, for your all. But do not satisfy yourself with only such faint motions within thee as may only be the effects of thy own spirit,—of thy dark, dull, listless, sluggish, dead, hard heart; at least, not of the efficacious, regenerating influence of the Divine Spirit. Didst thou never hear what mighty workings there have been in others, when God hath been transforming and renewing them, and drawing them into living union with his Son, and himself through him? What an amazing, penetrating light hath struck into their hearts, as 2 Cor. iv. 6; such as, when he was making the world, enlightened the chaos; such as hath made them see things that concerned them as they truly were and with their own proper face,—God, and Christ, and themselves, sin and duty, heaven and hell, in their own true appearances! How effectually they have been awakened! How the terrors of the Almighty have beset and seized their souls! What agonies and pangs they have felt in themselves, when the voice of God hath said to them, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"[1] How he hath brought them down at his feet, thrown them into the dust, broken them, melted them; made them abase themselves, loathe and abhor themselves; filled them with sorrow, shame, confusion, and with indignation towards their own guilty souls; habituated them to a severity against themselves, unto the most sharp and yet most unforced self-accusations, self-judging, and self-condemnation, so as even to make them lay claim to hell and to confess the portion of devils belonged to them, as their own most deserved portion! And if now their eyes have been directed toward a

[1] Eph. v. 14.

Redeemer and any glimmering of hope hath appeared to them; if now they are taught to understand God saying to them, 'Sinner, art thou yet willing to be reconciled, and accept a Saviour?'—O the transport into which it puts them! This is life from the dead! 'What! is there hope for such a lost wretch as I?' How tasteful now is that melting invitation, how pleasant an intimation doth it carry with it, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" etc. If the Lord of heaven and earth do now look down from the throne of glory, and say, 'What! sinner, wilt thou despise my favour and pardon, my Son, thy mighty, merciful Redeemer, my grace and Spirit, still?' what can be the return of the poor abashed wretch, overawed by the glory of the Divine Majesty, stung with compunction, overcome with the intimation of kindness and love? "I have heard of thee, O God, by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So inwardly is the truth of that word now felt, "That thou mayst remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."[1] 'But, sinner, wilt thou make a covenant with me and my Christ? wilt thou take me for thy God and him for thy Redeemer and Lord?' 'And may I, Lord, yet may I? O admirable grace! wonderful sparing mercy! that I was not thrown into hell at my first refusal! Yea, Lord, with all my heart and soul!—I renounce the vanities of an empty, cheating world, and all the pleasures of sin. In thy favour stands my life; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? whom on earth do I desire besides thee?" And O thou blessed Jesus! thou Prince of the kings of the earth! who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in thy blood, and whom the eternal God hath exalted to be "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins," I fall before thee, my Lord and my God! I here willingly tender my homage

[1] Ezek. xvi. 63.

at the footstool of thy throne. I take thee for the Lord of my life. I absolutely surrender and resign myself to thee. Thy love constrains me henceforth no more to live to myself, but to thee, who diedst for me, and didst rise again. And I subject and yield myself to thy blessed light and power, O Holy Spirit of grace! to be more and more illuminated, sanctified, and prepared for every good word and work in this world, and for an inheritance among them that are sanctified in the other.' Sinner, never give thy soul leave to be at rest till thou find it brought to some such transaction with God—the Father, Son, and Spirit—as this; so as that thou canst truly say and dost feel, thy heart is in it. Be not weary or impatient of waiting and striving, till thou canst say this is now the very sense of thy soul. Such things have been done in the world—but O how seldom of latter days!—so God hath wrought with men, "to save them from going down to the pit, having found a ransom for them." And why may he not yet be expected to do so? He hath smitten rocks ere now, and made the waters gush out; nor is his hand shortened, nor his ear heavy. Thy danger is not, sinner, that he will be inexorable, but lest thou shouldst. He will be entreated, if thou wouldst be prevailed with to entreat his favour with thy whole heart.

And that thou mayst, and not throw away thy soul and so great a hope, through mere sloth and loathness to be at some pains for thy life, let the text, which hath been thy *directory* about the things that belong to thy peace, be also thy *motive*, as it gives thee to behold the Son of God weeping over such as would not know those things. Shall not the Redeemer's tears move thee? O hard heart! consider what these tears import to this purpose:—

First, They signify the real depth and greatness of the misery into which thou art falling. They drop from an intellectual and most comprehensive eye, that sees far and pierces deep into things,—hath a wide and large prospect, takes the compass of that forlorn state into which unreconcilable sinners are hastening in all the horror of it. The Son

of God did not weep vain and causeless tears or for a light matter; nor did he for himself either spend his own or desire the profusion of others' tears: "Weep not for me, O daughters of Jerusalem," etc. He knows the value of souls: the weight of guilt, and how low it will press and sink them; the severity of God's justice and the power of his anger, and what the fearful effects of them will be when they finally fall. If thou understandest not these things thyself, believe him that did,—at least believe his tears.

Secondly, They signify the sincerity of his love and pity, the truth and tenderness of his compassion. Canst thou think *his* deceitful tears? his, who never knew guile? Was this like the rest of his course? And remember that he who shed tears, did, from the same fountain of love and mercy, shed blood too! Was that also done to deceive? Thou makest thyself some very considerable thing indeed, if thou thinkest the Son of God counted it worth his while to weep, and bleed, and die, to deceive thee into a false esteem of him and his love. But if it be the greatest madness imaginable to entertain any such thought, but that his tears were sincere and inartificial, the natural, genuine expressions of undissembled benignity and pity, thou art then to consider what love and compassion thou art now sinning against, what bowels thou spurnest; and that if thou perishest, it is under such guilt as the devils themselves are not liable to, who never had a Redeemer bleeding for them, nor, that we ever find, weeping over them.

Thirdly, They show the remedilessness of thy case if thou persist in impenitency and unbelief till the things of thy peace be quite hid from thine eyes. These tears will then be the last issues of even defeated love,—of love that is frustrated of its kind design. Thou mayst perceive in these tears the steady, unalterable laws of heaven, the inflexibleness of the Divine justice, that holds thee in adamantine bonds, and hath sealed thee up, if thou prove incurably obstinate and impenitent, unto perdition; so that even the Redeemer himself, he that is mighty to save, cannot at length save thee,

but only weep over thee, drop tears into thy flame,—which assuage it not, but (though they have another design, even to express true compassion,) do yet unavoidably heighten and increase the fervour of it, and will do so to all eternity. He even tells thee, sinner, 'Thou hast despised my blood; thou shalt yet have my tears. *That* would have saved thee, —*these* do only lament thee lost!'

But the tears wept over others as lost and past hope, why should they not yet melt thee, while as yet there is hope in thy case? If thou be effectually melted in thy very soul, and looking to Him whom thou hast pierced, dost truly mourn over him, thou mayst assure thyself the prospect his weeping eye had of lost souls did not include thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forlorn and hopeless; thy mourning over him will make it safe and happy. That it may be so, consider further, that,—

Fourthly, They signify how very intent he is to save souls, and how gladly he would save thine, if yet thou wilt accept of mercy while it may be had. For if he weep over them that will not be saved, from the same love that is the spring of these tears would saving mercies proceed to those that are become willing to receive them. And that love that wept over them that were lost, how will it glory in them that are saved! There his love is disappointed and vexed, crossed in its gracious intendment; but here, having compassed it, how will he "joy over thee with singing, and rest in his love!" And thou also, instead of being involved in a like ruin with the unreconciled sinners of the old Jerusalem, shalt be enrolled among the glorious citizens of the new, and triumph together with them in eternal glory!

APPENDIX.

Because some things, not fit to be wholly omitted, were as little fit to come into the body of a practical discourse, it was thought requisite to subjoin here the following additions, that will severally have reference to distinct parts of the foregoing discourse.

As to what was said of the unreasonableness and ill consequence of admitting it to be any man's duty to believe himself utterly rejected and forsaken of God, inasmuch as it would make that his duty which were repugnant to his felicity;—this is to be evinced by a consideration which also, even apart by itself, were not without its own great weight; namely, that such a belief were inconsistent *with his former stated and known duty;* it were therefore inconsistent with his felicity, inasmuch as it would make that duty impossible to be performed, which before was by constitution of the evangelical law made necessary to it,—namely, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." The hope of acceptance is so necessary to both these, that the belief of a man's being finally rejected or that he shall never be accepted, cannot but make them both impossible, equally impossible as if he were actually in hell,—as much impossible to him as to the devils themselves. Nor is this impossibility merely from a *moral impotency*, or that obduration of heart which were confessedly vicious and his great sin, but from the natural influence of that belief of his being for ever rejected, which, upon the mentioned supposition, were his

duty. Besides, inasmuch as it is the known duty of a sinner under the gospel to turn to God through Christ; and it is also declared in the same gospel—sufficiently to make it the common matter of faith to Christians—that none can of themselves turn to God and believe in his Son, without the help of special efficacious grace; it must hereupon be a man's duty also to pray for that grace which may enable him hereto. How deep in wickedness was Simon Magus, even in "the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," when yet Peter calls him to repentance and puts him upon praying for forgiveness,—which must imply also his praying for the grace to repent; but how can a man pray for that which, at the same time, he believes shall not be given him? Yea, and which is harder and more unaccountable, how can he stand obliged in duty to pray for that which, at the same time, he stands obliged in duty to believe he shall not obtain? How can these two contrary obligations lie upon a man at the same time? or, is he to look upon the former as ceased? Should he reckon the gospel as to him repealed, or his impenitency and infidelity, even when they are at the highest, no sins?

I know it is obvious to object, as to all this, the case of *the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, which will be supposed to be stated and determined in the sacred Scriptures; and being so, the person that hath committed it may equally be thought obliged—by a mixed assent, partly of faith to what is written, partly of self-knowledge, which he ought to have of his own acts and state—to conclude himself guilty of it; whereupon all the former inconvenience and difficulty will be liable to be urged as above. But even as to this also, I see not but it may fitly enough be said that though the general nature of that sin be stated and sufficiently determined in *thesi*, yet that God hath not left it determinable in *hypothesi*, by any particular person, that he hath committed it. For admit that it generally lies in imputing to the devil those works of the Holy Ghost by which the truth of Christianity was to be demonstrated, I

yet see not how any man can apply this to his own particular case, so as justly and certainly to conclude himself guilty of it. I take it for granted none will ever take the notion of blasphemy in that strictness, but that a man may possibly be guilty of this sin as well in thought as by speech. I also doubt not but it will be acknowledged on all hands that prejudice and malice against Christianity must have a great ingrediency into this sin; not such malice as whereby, knowing it to be the true religion, a man hates and detests it as such,—which would suppose these Pharisees whom our Saviour charges with it or cautions against it, to have been at that time, in their judgments and consciences, Christians; but such malignity and strong prejudice as darkens and obstructs his mind, that he judges it not to be true, against the highest evidence of its being so. It will also be acknowledged that some enmity and disaffection to true religion is common to all men, more especially in their unregeneracy and unconverted state.

Now, let it be supposed that some person or other, of a very unwarrantably sceptical genius, had opportunity to know certainly the matter of fact touching the miraculous works wrought by our Saviour, and understood withal somewhat generally of the doctrine which he taught; and that he sets himself as a philosopher to consider the case. Suppose that, partly through prejudice against the holy design of Christianity, whereof there is some degree in all, and partly through shortness of discourse, not having thoroughly considered the matter; he thinks it possible that some demon or other, with design under a specious pretence to impose upon or amuse the credulous vulgar, may have done all those strange things; suppose his judgment should for the present more incline this way: what if, thinking this to be the case in the instance of Apollonius Tyanæus, he hath not yet, upon a slighter view, discerned enough to distinguish them, but thinks alike of both cases? yea, and suppose he have spoken his sentiments to some or other;—perhaps upon further inquiry and search, he might see cause to alter his judgment; and now, setting

himself to inquire more narrowly, he perceives the unexceptionable, excellent scope and tendency of our Saviour's doctrine and precepts, considers the simplicity and purity of his life, contemplates further the awful greatness of his mighty works; but amidst these his deliberations, he finds among the rest of Christian constitutions this severe one,[1] and begins to fear lest, supposing the truth of this excellent religion, he have precluded himself of all the advantages of it by that former judgment of his:—what is he to do in this case? what were he to be advised unto? What! to pass judgment upon himself and his case as desperate? or not rather to humble himself before the God of heaven, ask pardon for his injurious, rash judgment, and supplicate for mercy, and for further illumination in the mystery of God, of the Father, and of Christ? Which course, that it may have a blessed issue with him, who dare venture to deny or doubt? And what have we to say hereupon, but that, in great wisdom and mercy, our Saviour hath only told us there is such a sin, and what the general nature of it is, or whereabouts it lies; but the judgment of particular cases wherein, or of the very pitch and degree of malignity wherewith, it is committed, he hath reserved to himself; intending further to strive with persons by his Spirit, while he judges them yet within the reach of mercy,—or withhold it, when he sees any to have arrived to that culminating pitch of malignity and obstinacy wherein he shall judge this sin specially to consist? And what inconvenience is it to suppose he hath left this matter, touching the degree, humanly undeterminable? The knowledge of it can do them who have committed it no good; and probably they have by it so blinded and stupified their own souls, as to have made themselves very little capable of apprehending that they have committed it, or of considering whether they have or no; but they are sunk into a deep abyss of darkness and death, so as that such knowledge may be as little possible as it would be useful to them,—all their faculties of intellection, consideration, and self-reflection,

[1] Matt. xii. 31, 32.

being, as to any such exercise, bound up in a stupifying, dead sleep.

And to what purpose should they have a rule by which to determine a case, who,—1. Can receive no benefit by the determination; and, 2. Who are supposed, when they are to use it, to have no faculty sufficiently apt to make this sad but true judgment of their case by it? But for them who have not committed it, and who are consequently yet capable of benefit by what should be made known about it, there is therefore enough made known for their real use and benefit. It will,—

1. Be of real use to many such *to know their danger of running into it.* And it is sufficient to that purpose that they are plainly told wherein the general nature of it consists or whereabouts it lies; without showing them the very point that hath certain death in it, or letting them know just how near they may approach it without being sure to perish, when there is danger enough in every step they take toward it: as if there were some horrid desert, into any part whereof no man hath any business to come, but in some part whereof there is a dreadful gulf whence arises a contagious *halitus*,[1] which, if he come within the verge of it, will be certainly poisonous and mortal to him: what need is there that any man should know just how near he may come, without being sure to die for it? He is concerned to keep himself at a cautious, awful distance.

2. It may be of great use to others that are afflicted with very torturing fears lest they have committed it, *to know that they have not.* And they have enough also to satisfy them in the case. For their very fear itself, with its usual concomitants in such afflicted minds, is an argument to them that they have not. While they find in themselves any value of Divine favour, any dread of his wrath, any disposition to consider the state of their souls, with any thought or design of turning to God and making their peace, they have reason to conclude God hath hitherto kept them out of that

[1] Vapour.

fearful gulf, and is yet in the way, and in treaty with them. For since "we are not sufficient to think anything that is good of ourselves," it is much more reasonable to ascribe any such thoughts or agitations of spirit that have this design, to him than to ourselves, and to account that he is yet at work with us,—at least in the way of common grace; though when our thoughts drive towards a conclusion against ourselves that we have committed that sin and towards despair thereupon, we are to apprehend a mixture of temptation in them, which we are concerned earnestly to watch and pray against. And yet even such temptation is an argument of such a one's not having committed that sin. For such as the devil may apprehend more likely to have committed it,—and it is not to be thought he can be sure who have,—he will be less apt to trouble with such thoughts, not knowing what the issue of that unquietness may prove and apprehending it *may* occasion their escaping quite out of his snare. And I do conceive this to be a safer method of satisfying such as are perplexed with this fear in our days, than to be positive in stating that sin *so*, or limiting it to *such circumstances*, as shall make it impossible to be committed in this age of the world. For let it be seriously considered, whether it be altogether an unsupposable thing, that with some in our days there may be an equivalency, in point of light and evidence of the truth of Christianity, unto what these Jews had, whom our Saviour warns of the danger of this sin, at that time when he so warned them. His warning and cautioning them about it, implies that he judged them at least in a possibility at that time of incurring the guilt of it; if the text[1] do not also imply that he reckoned them then actually to have committed it. For it is said, "he knew their thoughts,"[2]—that is, considered the temper of their minds; and thereupon said to them what follows concerning it. Let us consider wherein their advantage towards their being ascertained of the truth of the Christian religion was greater than we now can have. It was chiefly in this respect greater, that they had a nearer and

[1] Matt. xii. [2] Ver. 25.

more immediate knowledge of the matter of fact, wherein that evidence which our Saviour refers to did consist. A *more* immediate way of knowing it they had; the *most* immediate the persons whom he warns or charges seem not to have had: for those Pharisees, it is said, heard of the cure of the demoniac,—not that they saw it. They took it upon the—no doubt sufficiently credible—report of others. Now let it be further considered, what we have to balance this one single advantage. We have, to intelligent, considering persons, rationally sufficient evidence of the same matter of fact. But how great things, that have since followed, have we the sufficiently certain knowledge of besides, beyond what they had in view, at that time; as, the wonderful death of our Lord, exactly according to prediction, in many respects, together with all the unforetold amazing circumstances that attended it; his more wonderful resurrection, upon which so great a stress is laid for demonstrating the truth of the religion he taught; the destruction of Jerusalem, as he foretold, and the shattered condition of the Jewish nation, as was also foretold, ever since; the strange success of the gospel in the first and some following ages, by so unlikely means, against the greatest opposition imaginable, both of Jews and Pagans; not to insist on the apostasy foretold in the Christian church, with many more things that might be mentioned. Let it be considered, whether the want of so immediate way of knowing some of these things be not abundantly compensated by the greatness of the other things that are, however, sufficiently known. And if such as have wit and leisure to consider these things in our days, are often pressed to consider them, have them frequently represented and laid before their eyes,—if such, I say, have in view as great evidence, upon the whole, of the truth of Christianity, as these Pharisees had; it is then further to be considered, whether it be not possible that some such may equal the Jewish malice against the holy design of our religion. To which I only say, The Lord grant that none may. But if there be really cause to apprehend such a danger, some other

way should be thought of to cure the trouble of some, than by the danger and too probable ruin of others. However, none should themselves make their own case incurable, by concluding that they have sinned that sin, or by believing they are otherwise forsaken and rejected of God, so as that he will never more assist their endeavour to repent and turn to him through the Mediator.

If it be inquired here, 'Since, as hath been shown, some may be quite forsaken of God while yet they live in the world, ought such to believe then they are not forsaken, and so believe an untruth that they may make it true, or try if they can better their condition by it?' I answer, Nor that neither; for that God will further assist an obstinate sinner that hath long resisted his Spirit and despised his mercy, is *no matter of promise* to him, and so *no matter of faith.* When he doth conquer at length any such, it is of mere unpromised favour (as was also shown); whereof, therefore, he gives others no ground to despair, and for which they are deeply concerned with great earnestness to supplicate. But if it be said, 'How can they pray for that whereof they have no promise, and can have no faith, since what is not of faith is sin?'[1] I answer, That passage of Scripture would in this case be much misapplied. It speaks not of faith concerning the *certainty of any event to be expected*, but *the lawfulness of a work to be done;* and of doubting, not concerning the event, but my own act. Can any man in his wits doubt concerning his own act in this case, whether it be better to pray for the grace of God to save him, than slight it and perish? Nor are they without very encouraging promises concerning the event, that God will be "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,"[2] and that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;"[3]—which promises, it is true, the context of both shows, do speak of believing prayer. They are *to* faith, not *of* it; and import that God will reward and save the believer, not that he will give faith to the obstinate, contemptuous unbeliever. If he do this, it is, as was said, of

[1] Rom. xiv. 23. [2] Heb. xi. 6. [3] Rom. x. 13.

unpromised bounty. But though they are not promises to give faith, they should induce it; and incline sinners to cast themselves down before the throne of so gracious a God and seek grace to help them in their need, in confidence that he will never reject penitent, believing prayer. They, indeed, that for their former wilful sinning are utterely forsaken of God, will not thus apply themselves. But our question is, not what they will do, but what they should. Because they would not, therefore they were forsaken; and because they yet will not, they are still and finally forsaken. Their refusal proceeds not from any discouragement God hath given them, but from the malignity of their own hearts. God hath not repealed his gospel towards them. The connection continues firm between the preceptive and promissory parts of it. Their infidelity is not become their duty, but remains their heinous sin; and the more deeply heinous by how much their own malignity holds them more strongly in it.

Unto what also is discoursed (page 318) concerning anger and grief or other passions ascribed to God, it will not be unfit here to add, that unless they be allowed to signify real aversion of will, no account is to be given *what reality in him* they can signify at all. For to say—what some do seem to satisfy themselves with—that they are to be understood 'in relation to the *effect* produced, not as implying any analogous *affection*,'[1] though true as to the negative part, is as to the affirmative very defective and short; for the effects of anger and grief, upon which those names are put, when spoken of God, are not themselves in him, but in us. But we are still at a loss what they signify in him. Such effects must have some cause. And if they be effects which he works, they must have some cause in himself that is before them and productive of them. This account leaves us to seek what that cause is that is signified by these names. That it cannot be any passion, as the same names are wont to signify with us, is out of question. Nor, indeed, do those names primarily and most properly signify passion in ourselves. The passion

[1] 'Secundum effectum, non secundum affectum.'

is consequently only, by reason of that inferior nature in us which is susceptible of it. But the aversion of our mind and will is before it, and, in another subject, very separable from it, and possible to be without it. In the blessed God we cannot understand anything less is signified than real displacency at the things whereat he is said to be angry or grieved.

Our shallow reason, indeed, is apt to suggest in these matters, 'Why is not that prevented that is so displeasing?' And it would be said with equal reason, in reference to all sin permitted to be in the world, 'Why was it not prevented?' And what is to be said to this? Shall it be said that sin doth not displease God, that he hath no will against sin, it is not repugnant to his will? Yes; it is to his revealed will,—to his law. But is that an untrue revelation? His law is not his will itself, but the *signum*, the "sign," the discovery of his will. Now, is it an insignificant sign, a sign that signifies nothing, or to which there belongs no correspondent *significatum,—nothing that is signified by it?* Is that which is signified—for sure no one will say it signifies nothing—his real will, yea or no? Who can deny it? That will then,—and a most calm, sedate, impassionate will it must be understood to be,—sin, and consequently the consequent miseries of his creatures, are repugnant unto. And what will is that? It is not a peremptory will concerning *the event*, for the event falls out otherwise, which were upon that supposition impossible; "for who hath resisted his will?" as was truly intimated by the personated questionist,[1] but impertinently, when God's will of another, not a contrary, kind—that is, concerning another object—was in the same breath referred unto; "Why doth he yet find fault?" It is not the will of the event that is the measure of faultiness: for then there could not have been sin in the world, nor consequently misery, which only by the Creator's pleasure stands connected with it: for nothing could fall out against that irresistible will. The objector then destroys his own objec-

[1] Rom. ix. 19.

tion so absurdly and so manifestly as not to deserve any other reply than that which he meets with, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

And what is the other object about which the Divine will is also conversant? Matter of *duty*, and—what stands in connection with it, not abstractly and separately, but as it is so connected—our *felicity*. This is objectively another will, as we justly distinguish Divine acts that respect the creature by their different objects. Against this will falls out all the sin and misery in the world.

All this seems plain and clear, but is not enough. For it may be further said, When God wills this or that to be my duty, doth he not will this event, namely my doing it? Otherwise wherein is his will withstood, or not fulfilled, in my not doing it? He willed this to be my duty, and it is so. I do not, nor can hinder it from being so; yet I do it not, and that he willed not. If all that his will meant was that this should be my duty, but my doing it was not intended, his will is entirely accomplished; it hath its full effect, in that such things are constituted and do remain my duty, upon his signification of this his will; my not doing it not being within the compass of the object or the thing willed.

If it be said, 'He willed my doing it, that is, that I should do it, not that I *shall*;' the same answer will recur, namely, that his will hath still its full effect,—this effect still remaining, that I should do it; but that I shall, he willed not.

It may be said, 'I do plainly go against his will, however; for his will was that I should do so or so, and I do not what he willed I should.' It is true, I go herein against his will, if he willed not only my *obligation*, but my *action* according to it. And, indeed, it seems altogether unreasonable and unintelligible, that he should will to oblige me to that which he doth not will me to do.

Therefore it seems out of question, that the holy God doth constantly and perpetually, in a true sense, will universal obedience, and the consequent felicity of all his creatures capable thereof; that is, he doth will it with simple com-

placency, as what were highly grateful to him, simply considered by itself. Who can doubt but that purity, holiness, blessedness, wheresoever they were to be beheld among his creatures, would be a pleasing and delightful spectacle to him, being most agreeable to the perfect excellency, purity, and benignity of his own nature; and that their deformity and misery must be consequently unpleasing? But he doth not *efficaciously* will everything that he *truly* wills. He never willed the obedience of all his intelligent creatures, so as effectually to make them all obey, nor their happiness, so as to make them all be happy, as the event shows. Nothing can be more certain than that he did not so will these things; for then nothing could have fallen out to the contrary, as we see much hath. Nor is it at all unworthy the love and goodness of his nature not so to have willed, with that effective will, the universal fulness, sinlessness, and felicity of all his intelligent creatures. The Divine nature comprehends all excellencies in itself, and is not to be limited to that one only of benignity or an aptness to acts of beneficence; for then it were not infinite, not absolutely perfect, and so not divine. All the acts of his will must be consequently conform and agreeable to the most perfect wisdom. He "doth all things according to the counsel of his will." He wills, it is true, the rectitude of our actions, and what would be consequent thereto; but he first and more principally wills the rectitude of his own, and not only not to do an unrighteous, but not an inept or unfit thing. We find he did not think it fit efficaciously to provide concerning all men that they should be made obedient and happy, as he hath concerning some. That in the general he makes a difference, is to be attributed to his wisdom; that is, his wisdom hath in the general made this determination, not to deal with all alike, and so we find it ascribed to his wisdom that he doth make a difference. And in what a transport is the holy apostle in the contemplation and celebration of it upon this account, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his

judgments, and his ways past finding out!"[1] But now, when in particular he comes to make this difference between one person and another, there being *no reason in the object* to determine him this way more than that, his designing some for the objects of special favour and waiving others as to such special favour, when all were in themselves alike; in that case wisdom hath not so proper an exercise, but it is the work of free, unobliged *sovereignty* here to make the choice: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."[2]

Yet, in the meantime, while God doth not *efficaciously* will all men's obedience introductive of their happiness, doth it follow he wills it not *really* at all? To say he wills it *efficaciously*, were to contradict experience and his Word; to say he wills it not *really*, were equally to contradict his Word. He doth will it, but not primarily and as the more principal object of his will, so as to effect it notwithstanding whatsoever unfitness he apprehends in it,—namely, that he so overpower all as to make them obedient and happy. He really wills it, but hath greater reasons than this or that man's salvation why he effects it not. And this argues no imperfection in the Divine will, but the perfection of it, that he wills things agreeably to the reasonableness and fitness of them.

[1] Rom. xi. 33. [2] Eph. i. 5.

A DISCOURSE

CONCERNING THE

REDEEMER'S DOMINION OVER THE INVISIBLE WORLD,

AND THE

ENTRANCE THEREINTO BY DEATH.

SOME PART WHEREOF WAS PREACHED ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF JOHN HOGHTON, ESQ., ELDEST SON OF SIR CHARLES HOGHTON, OF HOGHTON TOWER, IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER, BARONET.

TO THE MOST DESERVEDLY HONOURED AND TRULY HONOURABLE

SIR CHARLES AND THE LADY MARY HOGHTON,

OF HOGHTON TOWER.

Grace, mercy, and peace, etc.

You will, I know, count it no indecency, that, when God hath so nearly, many years ago, joined you in relation, in affection, and now so lately, in the affliction, equally common to you both, I do also join your names on the same paper, and make this solemn address to you together.

It is by the inestimable favour of Heaven, that the mutual interest God hath given you in each other, as it obliges, doth also, as I have great reason to hope, effectually dispose and enable you, so, not only to partake in the comforts, but in the sorrows that are common to you both, as that the former shall be greatly increased and the latter proportionably allayed and mitigated thereby. Thus is the advantage of your conjugal state both represented in God's designation and apprehended in your own experience.

And you are to consider the blessing of God herein, as having a peculiarity in it; not being extended to all so related, neither to all that were great in this world, nor to all that were pious and good. Great worldly felicity hath been rendered insipid and spiritless, great calamities much the more bitter, by the want of a meet mutual helpfulness between such relations.

A great and a good man in his time, a prince (as he is thought to have been) in his country, a man that "was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil,"[1] when he lost—not one, not

[1] Job i. 1.

the eldest only, of his numerous offspring, as you have—but all at once, seven sons and three daughters, with such concomitant circumstances of accumulated afflictions, as, blessed be God, are not in your case; and might now expect some relief, from his other self, the nearest and most inward companion of his life, and partaker of his joys and sorrows;—all the succour he hath from her, was an impious endeavour to provoke and irritate his spirit, that taunting scoff, "Dost thou still retain thy integrity?" and that horrid advice, "Curse God, and die." Whereas that rational, religious, soul-composing thought, "Shall we receive good things at the hand of God, and not also evil things?" was deeply fixed in the mind of the one, how much more effectually relieving had it been, if it had circulated between both the relatives; and they had, alternately, propounded and enlarged upon it to one another!

With you, I cannot doubt, it hath been so; and that you have made it your business to improve your mutual interest, not to aggravate, but to alleviate, your affliction each to other.

You have, both of you, great occasion and obligation, to revolve and recount to each other the many good things you have received at the hand of God, to mitigate what there is of evil in this dispensation.

Both of you have sprung of religious and honourable families, favoured of God, valued, and beloved in the countries where he had planted them. They have been *both*, seats of religion, and of the worship of God; the resorts of his servants; houses of mercy to the indigent, of justice to the vicious, of patronage to the sober and virtuous; of good example, to all about them.

You were both dedicated to God early, and he gave early testimony of his accepting the dedication. He began with you both betimes, blessing your education and owning you for his, by disposing and forming your spirits to own betimes the God of your fathers. He hath blessed you indeed, adding the spiritual blessings in heavenly things, to your many earthly comforts,—which Jabez might mean, not content with a common blessing; and the more probably from the acceptance he found.[1] God granted his request, as Solomon's,[2] when *his* request was as little vulgar.

You both concurred, in the dedication of this your son, as in the rest of yours; and, I doubt not with great seriousness, you cove-

[1] 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10. [2] 1 Kings ii. 10.

nanted with God in Christ, to be his God. And if He enabled you to be in good earnest herein, even that was of special grace and favour; and ought to come into the account of the many good things you have received of God's hand, as "offering to God willingly," did in the estimate of David: when the oblation was of a meaner kind.[1]

But then you ought to consider what the import and meaning was of that your covenant, wherein you accepted God in Christ to be the God of your son, and dedicated him to God through Christ to be His. Was it not absolute and without limitation, that God should be a God to him entirely and without reserve? and that he should be His absolutely, and be disposed of by Him at his pleasure? Otherwise, there was a repugnancy and contradiction, in the very terms of your covenant. To be a God to him! Is not *God* the name of a Being incapable of limitation? Doth it not signify infinite unlimited power and goodness? To be a God to any one, therefore, under restriction, is to be a God to him, and no God. And so to covenant with God, can neither have sincerity in it nor good sense. He can be under no restraint in the exercises of his power and goodness towards any to whom he vouchsafes to be their God in covenant, but what he is pleased to lay upon himself; which must be from his own wisdom and good pleasure, to which in covenanting we refer ourselves,—with *particular* faith, in reference to what he hath expressly promised, and with *general*, that all shall be well, where his promise is not express. But from ourselves, nothing can be prescribed to him. He must be our all or nothing; in point of enjoyment as our sovereign, all-comprehending Good; in point of government, as our sovereign, all-disposing Lord. So we take him, in covenanting with him, for ourselves and ours. For he so propounds and offers himself to us; if we accept and take him accordingly, there is a covenant between him and us; otherwise we refuse him, and there is no covenant. When he promises, as to his part, he promises his all; to be God all-sufficient to us; to be ours in all his fulness, according to our measure and capacity: we are not straitened in him, but in ourselves. He undertakes to be to us and do for us, all that it belongs to him, as a God to be and do; to give us grace and glory—about which there can be no dispute or doubt, they are always and

[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

immutably good—and to withhold from us no good thing.[1] Here are comprehended, with the former, *inferior* good things, about which, because they are but mutably and not always good, there may be a doubt whether now and in present circumstances they will be good for us or no. And now it belongs to him, as he is to do the part of a God to us, to judge and determine for us: for which he alone is competent as being God *only wise*, and otherwise he were not God *all-sufficient;* and not to leave that to us, who are so apt to be partial and mistaken in our judgment.

But when he makes his demand from us, of what we on our part are to be and do, he demands our all, absolutely; that we surrender ourselves and ours, whatsoever we are and have, to his pleasure and dispose, without other exception or restriction, than by his promise he hath laid upon himself.

Nor are we to think it strange there should be this difference, in the tenor of his covenant, between his part and ours. For we are to remember, the covenant between him and us is not as of equals: he covenants as God; we, as creatures: he, according to the universal infinite perfection and all-sufficiency of a God; we, according to the insufficiency, imperfection, and indigency of creatures.

These things were, I doubt not, all foreknown, and, I hope, considered by you, when you so solemnly transacted with God, concerning this your son; wherein you could not but then take Him for *your* God, as well as *his* God. It needs now only to be applied to the present case; and it manifestly admits this application, namely:—

That this His disposal of him, in taking him now up to Himself, to be glorified by Him and to glorify him in the heavenly state, was a thing then agreed upon, by solemn covenant, between God and you. It was done by your own virtual and unretracted consent. The substance of the thing was agreed to expressly; that God should be his God, and finally, make him happy and blessed in Himself. But if you say you would only have had his complete blessedness yet a while deferred, I will only say, could you agree with that God, whose he was and whose you are, about the substance of so great a transaction, and now differ with Him about a circumstance? And besides, all circumstances must be comprehended in your agreement. For taking him to be your God, you

[1] Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

take him to be Supreme Disposer in all things, and his will to be in everything the rule and measure of yours: which you have expressly consented to as often as you have prayed, either in the words or after the tenor of that prayer, wherein our Lord hath taught us to sum up our desires, and represent the sense of our hearts.

But besides the duty, that is, both by his law and by covenant agreement, owing to God, it is also to be considered as a high dignity put upon you, to be the covenanted parents of a glorified son; a matter of greater boast, than if you could say, 'Our son' (to repeat what I formerly wrote) 'is one of the greatest princes on earth!'

How far should paganism be outdone by Christianity, which exhibits to our view death abolished, life and immortality brought to light, by Jesus Christ in the gospel;[1] which sets before us all the glories of the other world in a bright representation; which if we *believe*,—that faith will be to us the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not! Thus, though you saw not the kind reception and abundant entrance of this son of your delights into the everlasting kingdom, it will yet be a thing evident to you; and your faith will render it a great and a most substantial reality. Pagans had but obscure glimmerings of such things; and in such afflicting cases, when they have occurred, comparatively lank and slender supports, yet such as were not to be despised.

Should I transcribe what I find written in way of consolation by Plutarch to Apollonius, upon the loss of a son, you would see what would give both instruction and admiration. I shall mention some passages. He praises the young person deceased, for his comeliness, sobriety, piety, dutifulness towards parents, obligingness towards friends; acknowledges that sorrow, in the case of losing such a son, hath (*φυσικὴν ἀρχὴν*) a principle in nature, and is of the things that are (*οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*) not in our power, or which we cannot help; that to be destitute of it is neither possible nor fit; that an apathy or insensibleness in such a case is no more desirable than that we should endure to have a limb, a part of ourselves, cut or torn off from us without feeling it: but yet affirms that immoderate sorrow

[1] 2 Tim. i. 10.

upon such an occasion is (*παρὰ φύσιν*) preternatural, and hath a pravity in it, and proceeds from a misinformed mind : that we ought in any such case to be neither (*ἀπαθεῖς* nor *δυσπαθεῖς*) unaffected nor ill affected. He tells his friend a story—the meaning whereof is more considerable to us than the credit of it, as perhaps it was to him—concerning two Grecian youths, Cleobis and Biton, whose mother having a duty to perform in the temple of Juno, and the mules not being at hand, in the instant when she expected them, to draw her chariot thither, they most officiously drew it themselves ; with which act of piety their mother was so transported that she made her request to Juno on their behalf, that if there were anything more desirable unto mortals than other, she would therewith reward her sons ; who thereupon threw them into a sleep, out of which they awaked no more : thereby signifying that death was the best gift that could be bestowed upon persons of such supposed piety as they !

To which purpose, is what he relates concerning the death of Euthynous, an Italian, referred to towards the close of the following discourse, son and heir to the ample estate of Elysius, a person of principal dignity among the Terinæans : to whom anxiously inquiring of diviners, concerning the cause of this calamity, the spectre of his son, introduced by the father of the latter, appeared in his sleep, showing him certain Greek verses, the sum whereof was, 'Thy inquiry was foolish.'

'The minds of men are vain : Euthynous rests by a kindly decreed death,
Because his living longer had neither been good for him nor his parents.'

He afterwards adds, 'A good man, when he dies, is worthy not so much of lamentations, as of hymns and praises.'

He animadverts upon the aptness of parents to quarrel with any circumstances of a son's death, be they what they will. If he die abroad, then the aggravation is, that neither the father nor the mother had opportunity to close his eyes ; if at home, then how is he plucked away, even out of our hands !

He gives divers memorable instances of sundry great persons bearing with strange composure of mind, the same kind of affliction. I omit what he wrote to his wife on their loss of a child ; as also to recite many very instructive passages out of Seneca writing to Marcia on the same account, namely by way of consolation for her

loss of a son; and to Helvia, for her loss in the same kind; to Polybius, having lost a near relation, etc.

But we have the oracles of God, and do, too commonly, less need to receive instruction from heathens than deserve to be reproached by them. That there is so frequent cause for the complaint of that ancient worthy [1] in the Christian Church, 'Non præstat fides quod præstitit infidelitas;' 'The infidelity of pagans performs greater things than the faith of Christians.' Their sedate temper, their mastery over turbulent passions, may, in many instances, shame our impotency and want of self-government, in like cases.

For who of them have ever had, or could have so great a thing to say, as is said to us by the word of the Lord; for this very purpose, "that we may not sorrow concerning them that are asleep, even as others who have no hope:" that is, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you" —and it is said by the forementioned authority, the Lord himself having revealed it to this great apostle, and directed him to say it— "that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." [2]

I have transcribed these few verses, that they might readily appear to present view: and because all their efficacy and all our advantage by them depends upon our believing them, let us closely put the question to ourselves, 'Do we believe them? or do we not?' The apostle seems to design the putting us upon this self-reflection by inserting the supposition, "If we believe," [3]—as much as to say, This will effectually do the business of allaying all our hopeless sorrow. For, if we believe that one fundamental truth—and therefore let us see whether we do or no—of Christ's dying and rising again, it will draw such a train of consequences, all tending to fill our souls with a vital joy, as will leave no place for

[1] Hierom. [2] 1 Thess. iv. 13—18. [3] Ver. 14.

undue sorrow any longer. That faith will be still urging and carrying us forward; will make us wholly intent upon prospect and expectation. What are we now to look for upon such a foundation, so firmly laid and fully believed? If we believe that Jesus died! He did not submit to die, without a design; and his rising again speaks him master of his design, and that he hath it now entirely in his power. He died not for himself, but for them he was to redeem! And being now risen again, what must become of them? All that follows is now matter of glorious triumph.

If Plato, Plutarch, or Seneca had but once had such a revelation from heaven as this, and had that ground to believe it that we have, how full would their writings have been of it! How had they abounded in lofty paraphrases, upon every period and word of it!

The faith of such things would surely make a truly Christian heart so earnestly press forward in the expectation of the great things still to ensue, as to leave it little leisure for retrospection. And this is the source of all our intemperate sorrow, in such a case as this,—our framing to ourselves pleasing suppositions of being as we were, with such and such friends and relatives about us as we heretofore enjoyed. As hope of what is future and desirable feeds our joy, so memory of good things past doth our sorrow. In such a case as this, which the apostle here speaks to, the decease of our dear friends and relatives "fallen asleep;" we are apt to look back, with a lingering eye, upon that former state of things: and to say, as he, '*O mihi præteritos*—O that God would recall for me the years that are gone over!' Or, as in sacred language, "O that I were as in months past . . . . when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me; when my children were about me!"[1]

What pleasant scenes do we form to ourselves, afresh, of past things, on purpose to foment present sorrow! And whether we have that design or no, we are more prone to look back to former things we have known, than forward to future we know not; especially if the further we look back, the less we find of trouble intermingled in our former course. A smooth and pleasant path we would go over again, if reason and the necessity of affairs do not recall us, and urge us forward.

[1] Job xxix. 2, 4, 5.

And so, Sir, might you find matter for a very copious and not ungrateful recollection, to call over again, and revolve in your thoughts, the pleasures of your youth, more innocent than of many others, when you were encumbered with no cares, entertained with various delights of one sort and another, in this or that pleasant seat of your parents. But how remote is it from you, upon consideration, to wish yourself back into your juvenile state and circumstances? How much a more generous and God-like pleasure is it, to be doing good in the world and still to abound therein, to go forward, and do still more and more!

And, Madam, who could have a more pleasant retrospect upon former days, than you? recounting your Antrim delights; the delight you took in your excellent relations, your garden-delights, your closet-delights, your Lord's-days' delights! But how much a greater thing is it to serve God in your present station, as the mother of a numerous and hopeful offspring; as the mistress of a large family; where you bear your part, with your like-minded consort, in supporting the interest of God and religion, and have opportunity of scattering blessings round about you!

But our business is not recurring or looking back. God is continually calling us forward. Time is a stream, running on towards the vast ocean. Tending backward, is vain striving against the stream. And as it is the course and method of nature, of providence, and grace, to tend forward and carry us from less to greater things in this world; so do all these conspire to carry us on,—because our ἀκμή, our highest pitch, cannot be here,—to yet far greater things in the greater world. Of which vast world, it is the design of the following discourse to give you some account; though, God knows, it is but a very imperfect one. Such as it is, if God only make it an occasion to you of fixing your minds and hearts upon that mighty theme, you will find it easy and pleasant to you to amplify upon it and enlarge it to yourselves; and thereby, through God's blessing, I doubt not, arrive to a fulness of satisfaction concerning this late dispensation, which hath a gloominess upon it; but is in very deed only gloomy on one side, namely, downwards, and towards this wretched world, this region of sorrow and darkness: but on the side upwards, and towards that other world which casts its lustre upon it, its phasis and appearance will be altogether bright and glorious. And the more you look by a

believing intuition into that other world where our blessed Redeemer and Lord bears rule in so transcendent glory, the more will you be above all the cloudy darkness of this event of Providence towards yourselves and your family. Herein, your perusal of this very defective essay may be of some use to you; and I reckoned it might be of more lasting and permanent use to you and yours after you, and to as many others into whose hands it might fall, as a little book than as one single sermon.

You will, however, I doubt not, apprehend in it the sincere *desire* to assist you in this your present difficult trial; followed by the faithful *endeavour* of

Most honoured in the Lord,

Your very respectful and obliged servant

In Him, and for His sake,

JOHN HOWE.

May 17, 1699.

THE REDEEMER'S DOMINION OVER THE INVISIBLE WORLD.

REVELATION i. 18.

"AND HAVE THE KEYS OF HELL"—HADES, OR THE UNSEEN WORLD—"AND OF DEATH."

THE peculiar occasion of this present solemnity,—I mean that is additional to the usual business of the Lord's-day,—may be somewhat amusing to narrower and less considering minds; that is, that I am now to take notice to you of what the most would call the premature or untimely death of a most hopeful young gentleman,—the heir of a very considerable family, greatly prepared by parts and pious sentiments, and further preparing by study and conversation, to be useful to the age,—cut off in his prime, when the mere 'showing him'[1] to the world had begun to raise an expectation, in such as knew him, of somewhat more than ordinary hereafter from him, his future advantageous circumstances being considered; of which you will hear further towards the close of this discourse.

Nor did I know any passage in the whole sacred volume, more apt to serve the best and most valuable purpose in such a case, than the words now read; none more fitted to enlarge our minds, to compose them, and reduce to a due temper even theirs who are most concerned and most liable to be disturbed; or to instruct us all how to interpret and comment aright upon so perplexing and so intricate a Pro-

[1] Ostendunt terris hunc tantùm fata, nec ultra esse sinunt.

vidence as this, at the first and slighter view, may seem unto us.

In order whereto our business must be to *explain* and *apply* this most weighty, awful saying.

First. For the explication, these three things are to be inquired into:

Who it is that claims, and asserts to himself this power here spoken of?

What it is about which this claimed power is to be conversant?

What *sort* of power it is that this emblematical expression signifies to belong to him?

I. Who it is that claims the power here spoken of; where the inquiry is not so much concerning the *person* that makes this claim; which all the foregoing context puts out of question to be "our Lord Christ:" but touching the special notion and capacity wherein he claims it, and according whereto it must be understood to belong to him.

And whereas he is described by very distinct titles and attributes, promiscuously interwoven in the preceding verses of the chapter, namely, that sometimes he is introduced speaking in the style of a God,—as, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty;"[1] and again, "I am Alpha and Omega,"[2]—but that sometimes he is represented in the form of a man, and accordingly described even from "head to foot," and said to appear, in the vision that exhibits him, "as one like unto the Son of man," that we might certainly understand him so to be;[3] and such things said of him as are incident to a mortal man, the shedding of his blood,[4] and that "he was dead;"[5] yea, and expressions of this different import intermingled, that we might know it was the same person that was continuedly spoken of under these so vastly different characters, as "I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was

[1] Rev. i. 8. [2] Ver. 11. [3] Vers. 13—16. [4] Ver. 5.
[5] Ver. 18, former part.

dead: "[1]—we may thereupon very reasonably conclude that he is not here to be conceived under the one notion or the other, neither as God nor as man, separately or exclusively of each other; but as both together, as Θεάνθρωπος, as "God-man," under which conjunct notion he receives and sustains the office of our Redeemer, and Mediator between God and man.

Which will enable us the more clearly to answer the third inquiry, when we come to it, concerning the *kind* of that power which is here claimed; and which, because there can be no doubt of the justice of his claim, we are hereby taught to ascribe to him.

For the management whereof, we are also hence to reckon him every way competent; that he was *par negotio*, that it was not too big for him; no expressions being used to signify his true humanity, but which are joined with others as appropriate to Deity: and that nothing therefore obliges us to narrow it more than the following account imports; which we are next to inquire about; namely—

II. The large extent of the object about which the power he here claims is to be conversant, that is, *hades;* as we read, *hell*, but which is truly to be read "the unseen world, and death."

The former of these, we with a debasing limitation, and, as I doubt not will appear, very unreasonably do render "hell."

The power belonging to Christ we are elsewhere taught to conceive is of unspeakably greater latitude. And *here* we are not taught to confine it to so vile and narrow limits, as this *translation* gives it. All things in the context conspire to magnify him, and, agreeably hereto, to magnify his dominion. When therefore the apparent design is to speak him *great*,—that he should only be represented as the jailer of devils and their companions, is to me unaccountable, unless a very manifest necessity did induce to it.

From the word ἅδης, there can be no pretence for it.

[1] Vers. 17, 18.

Though it ought to be extended, it is by no means to be restrained to that sense, which as it is the ignoblest, so it will appear but a very small, minute part of its signification; whether we consider the literal import or the common use of the word.

Literally it signifies but what we see not, or what is out of our sight.

And as the word of which it is compounded signifies also "to know," as well as "to see," it may further signify, that state of things which lies without the compass of our knowledge, even out of the reach of our mental sight; or concerning which, though we are to believe what is revealed, we cannot immediately or distinctly know it; and in reference whereto, therefore, we are "to walk by faith, not by sight."[1]

And the common use of the word hath been very agreeable hereto with writers of all sorts; that is, to signify indefinitely the unseen world; or the state of the deceased out of our world, who are, consequently, gone out of our sight, whether they were good or bad; so as not peculiarly to signify "hell," or any place or state of torment only.

It were easy to abound in quotations to this purpose, if it were either needful or proper in a discourse of this nature.

What I intend in this kind I shall only set down on the by in the margin, upon which they that will may cast their eye;[2] that the discourse be not interrupted as to others that

[1] 2 Cor. v. 7.

[2] And here it may suffice to take notice that Greek writers, poets, philosophers, historians, and other writers, that have made only occasional mention of this word ᾅδης, or of the words next akin to it, ἀΐς or ἀΐδης; or lexicographers, that have purposely given an account of it, from Greek authors, that must be supposed best to understand the use of words in their own tongue,—generally such as have not been engaged in a controversy, that obliges men usually to torture words to their own sense, or to serve the hypothesis which they had espoused,—have been remote from confining this, or the cognate words, to that narrow sense as only to signify a place or state of torment for bad men, but understood it as comprehending also, a state of felicity for the pious and good.

For such as have been concerned in interpreting this or other like words

either have no need to be informed in this matter, having known as much before as can be now told them; or no inclination to be diverted from their present purpose in reading; apprehending that what is generally told them,

with reference to the known and famous controversy, which I need not mention, their judgments must weigh according to the reputation they are of with the reader.

The Greeks, no doubt, best understood their own language; and among them can we think that Homer, in the beginning of his first *Iliad*, when he speaks of the many brave souls of his heroes,—those ἴφθιμοι ψυχαί, which the war he is describing sent into the invisible regions, ἀΐδι προΐαψεν,—that he ever dreamt they were all promiscuously dispatched away to a place of torment? Not to mention other passages where he uses the word ᾅδης to the same purpose. Divers others of the Greek poets are cited by several ready to our hands, with which I shall not cumber these pages. That one is enough, and nothing can be fuller to our purpose, which is quoted by Clem. Alexandr. *Str.* lib. v. (as well as by sundry others), and ascribed to the comic Diphilus (though by others to another, Philemon) :—

> Καὶ γὰρ καθ' ᾅδην δύο τρίβους νομίζομεν
> Μίαν δικαίων, χατέραν ἀσεβῶν ὁδόν.

In hades we reckon there are two paths,—the one of the righteous, the other of the wicked; plainly showing that hades was understood to contain heaven and hell. Plato, when in his *Phædo* he tells us that he that comes into hades, ἀμύητος, καὶ ἀτέλεστος, not initiated and duly prepared, is thrown into Βόρβορος (a stinking lake), but he that comes into it fitly purified shall dwell with the gods, as expressly signifies hades to include the same opposite states of misery and felicity. In that dialogue called *Axiochus*, though supposed not to be his, written by one that sufficiently knew the meaning of such a word, we are told that when men die they are brought into the Πεδίον ἀληθείας, the 'field of truth,' where fit judges that examine τίνα βίον, what manner of life every one lived while he dwelt in the body, that they who while they lived here were inspired by a good genius or spirit, go into the region of pious men, having before they came into hades been purified: such as led their lives wickedly are hurried by furies up and down chaos—in the region of the wicked. In the third book *de Repub.* Plato blames the poets that they represent the state of things in hades too frightfully, when they should μᾶλλον ἐπαινεῖν, praise it rather. Plutarch, *de Superstitione*, brings in Plato speaking of hades, as a person, or a god, Dis or Pluto (as they frequently do), and says he is φιλάνθρωπος, 'benign or friendly to men;' therefore not a tormentor of them only. Cælius Rhodigin. quotes this same passage of Plutarch, and takes notice that our Saviour speaks of the state of torment by another word, not "hades," but "gehenna;" which sufficiently shows how he understood it himself.

And whereas there are who disagree to this notation of this word, that

only concerning the usual signification of a word, is not said without some ground.

And let texts of Scripture be consulted about that; how "hades," and the correspondent word in the Old Testament, "sheol," are used there. If we take the help of interpreters, the impartial reader is to judge of their fidelity and ability who go our way.[1]

makes it signify "unseen," as some will fetch it from the Hebrew and go as far back as Adam in their search, alleging for this the authority of an old sibyl; others will have it go for ἀηδής, and signify as ἀτερπής, "unpleasant;" nothing is plainer than that this other is the common notion, which (though fancy hath not a greater dominion in anything than in etymology) would make one shy of stretching invention to find how to differ from the generality. Therefore Calepin, upon this word, tells us that the Greek grammarians do, against the nature of the *etymon* (which plainly enough shows what they understood that to be), generally direct its beginning to be writ with the *asper spirit;* but yet he makes it signify "obscure," or "not visible." And though Plato is endeavoured to be hooked in to the deriving it from Adam by a very far fetch, yet it is plain that his calling it τόπον ἀδηλον, in a place before referred to, shows he understood it to signify "invisible:" and so lexicons will commonly derive it, ('Vulgo,' says Cælius Rhodig.) But its extensiveness, as comprehending a state of happiness, is our principal concern, which way (as we might show by many more instances) the common stream carries it. Pausanias, in his 'ΑΡΚΑΔΙΚΑ', speaking of Hermes (according to Homer) as Διὸς διάκονον, and that he did lead souls ὑπὸ τὸν ᾅδην, could not be thought to mean they were then universally miserable. Sext. Empir. is an authority good enough for the meaning of a Greek word; when (*Adversus Mathem.*) he tells us, though by way of objection, all men have a common notion περὶ τῶν ἐν ᾅδου, (using the genitive with ἐν, as Homer and others do; another word, 'house' or 'abode,' in the dative, being understood,) and yet, as to the thing, he afterwards distinguishes poets' fables, and what, from the nature of the soul itself, all have a common apprehension of. As also Diog. Laert. hath the same phrase, mentioning the writings of Protagoras, who, he says, wrote one book περὶ τῶν ἐν ᾅδου, using the genitive, as here, after ἐν, as hath been usual, on the mentioned account. And though his books were burnt by the Athenians, because of the dubious title of one of them concerning the gods, so that we have not opportunity to know what his opinion of "hades" was, we have reason, more than enough, to think he understood it not of a state of torment only for evil spirits.

[1] Primate Usher's judgment may be seen in his answer to the Jesuits' challenge, that this word properly signifies the other world, the place or state of the dead; so that heaven itself may be comprehended in it. Grotius, on Luke xvi. 23, makes "hades" most certainly to signify a place withdrawn from our sight; spoken of the body, the grave; of the soul, all that region

Upon the whole, it being most evident, that hell is but a small and mean part of what is signified by "hades," it will be very unreasonable to represent or conceive of the power here ascribed to our Lord according to that narrow notion of it: and would be a like incongruity, as if, to magnify the person of highest dignity in the court of a mighty prince, one should say, "He is the keeper of the dungeon."

The word itself, indeed, properly taken, and according to its just extent, mightily greatens him; that is, it is as much as to say, 'his dominion is of unknown limits;' such as no eye can measure. We think with a sort of veneration, of what is represented as too big for our knowledge. We have a natural awe and reverence for unsearchable darkness. But in the meantime we herein suffer a just diminution of ourselves;—that when our inquiry stops and can proceed no further, it being but a very little part of the universe that lies within our compass, having tired our inquiring eye and mind, upon all the rest we write "hades," call it "unseen" or "unknown."

And because we call it so in reference to us, God himself calls it so too: it being his way (as is observed by that noted

wherein it is separate from the body. So that as Dives was in hades, so was Lazarus too, but in separate regions; for both paradise and hell, or, as the Grecians were wont to speak, Elysii and Tartara, were in hades. You may have in him more quotations from the poets, the sense of the Essenes from Josephus, and passages from divers of the fathers to the same purpose. Dr. Hammond's mind was the same, copiously expressed on Matt. xi. 20; but differs from Grotius in ascribing to Philemon the iambics above recited, which the other gives to Diphilus. Dr. Lightfoot is full to the same purpose, on the 4th Art. of the Creed. And though Bellarmine will have this word always signify "hell," (which if it do with "sheol," the correspondent word, Jacob desired to go to hell to his son, as Dr. Hammond argues;) Camero (as good a judge) thinks, except once, it never does.

If any desire to see more to this purpose with little trouble to themselves, let them peruse Martinius's lexicon on the word 'inferus' or 'infernus.' I could refer them to many more whom I forbear to mention. Only, if any think in some or other text of Scripture this word must signify "hell" only, since it is of that latitude as to signify "heaven" in other places, an impartial view of the circumstances of the text must determine whether there it be meant of the one, or the other, or both.

Jew[1]), speaking to men, to "use the tongue of the children of men," to speak to them in their own language, and allow them to coin their own words: which at first they often do very occasionally; nor, as to this, could they have a fairer or a more urgent occasion, or that is more self-justifying, than in one word to say of that other world, that it is hades or "invisible," when that is truly *all* that they have to say, or can have any immediate notice of about it.

It hath therefore its rise from ourselves, and the penury of our knowledge of things; and is at once both an ingenuous confession, with some sort of modest cover and excuse of our own ignorance: as with geographers, all that part of this globe, which they cannot describe, is *terra incognita;* and with philosophers, such phenomena in nature as they can give no account of, they resolve, shortly and in the most compendious way, into some or other occult quality, or somewhat else, as occult!

How happy were it, if in all matters that concern religion, and in *this*, as it doth so, they would shut up in a sacred venerable darkness what they cannot distinctly perceive, it being once by the undeceiving word expressly asserted, that *it is;* without, therefore, denying its reality, because they clearly apprehend not *what* it is.

With too many their religion is so little, and their pride and self-conceit so great, that they think themselves fit to be standards; that their eye or mind is of a size large enough to measure the creation, yea, and the Creator too; and by how much they have the less left them of mind, or the more it is sunk into earth and carnality, the more capable it is of being the measure of all reality, of taking the compass of all being, created and uncreated. And so that of the philosopher takes place in the worst sense can be put upon it—"to see darkness is to see nothing:" all is nullity that their sense reaches not. Hades is with such indeed, empty, imaginary darkness; or in plainer English, there is neither heaven nor hell, because they see them not.

[1] Maimonides.

But we ought to have the greater thoughts of it, not the less, for its being too big, too great, too glorious for our present view, and that it must as yet rest, as to us, and so let it rest a while, under the name of *hades*—the unknown dominion of our great Lord; according to that most express account he at his ascension gave of the existence of both parts together,—that less known to us, and that more known,—"All power is given unto me both in heaven and earth."[1]

That death is added, as contained also within the limits of our Lord's dominion, doth expressly signify his custody of the passage from this visible world to the invisible; namely, as he commands the entrance into each distinct part of hades, the invisible world, consisting of both heaven and hell, so he hath power over death too, which is the common outlet from this world and the passage unto both.

But it withal plainly implies his very absolute power over this visible world of ours also: for it signifies he hath the power of measuring every one's time here, and how long each inhabitant of this world shall live in it. If it belong to him to determine when any one shall die, it must by consequence belong to him to assign the portion and *dimensum* of time that every one shall live. Nor is there any conceivable moment in the time of any one's life, wherein he hath not this power of putting a period by death thereunto, at his own pleasure. He is therefore signified to have the power of every man's life and death at once. And the power of life and death is very high and great power. He therefore herein implicitly claims what is elsewhere expressly ascribed to him, "None . . . . lives to himself," (that is, *de jure*, no man should,) "or dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."[2]

In sum, here is asserted to him a dominion over both worlds; this in which we live, and that into which we die,

[1] Matt. xxviii. 18. [2] Rom. xiv. 7—9.

whether the one or the other part of it; and so in reference to men who once have inhabited this world, the sense of this text, and that we are insisting on, is the same: though hades is of vastly larger extent than only to be the receptacle of such as have lived *here;* it having also, in both the parts of it, innumerable inhabitants who never had a dwelling assigned them in this world of ours at all.

But thus far we have the vast extent of our Lord Christ's dominion, competently cleared to be the proper intendment of this text; and that it never meant so faint and minute a representation of it, as only to make him keeper of the bottomless pit. Though of that also he hath the key, as we shall further take notice; but are now to inquire of,—what will take up less time,—

III. The kind of that power over so vast a realm, or manifold realms, signified by this emblematical expression of "having the keys," etc.

Every one knows that the keys are *insignia,* some of the tokens of power; and, according to the peculiarity of the object, may be of Divine power.

The Jews, as some writers of their affairs say, appropriate the keys of three, others of four things to God only: of life, or the entrance into this world: of the rain, or the treasures of the clouds: of the earth (say some[1]), as of the granary of corn: and of the grave; 'of which,' says one of their own, 'the Holy, Blessed One hath the keys of the sepulchres in his hand,' etc. And as we may be sure he admits thither, so he emits from thence; and (as he says) 'in the future age, the Holy, Blessed One will unlock the treasures of souls, and will open the graves, and bring every soul back into its own body,'[2] etc.

Nor is this key of the vast hades, when it is in the hand of our Redeemer, the less in the hand of the *Holy, Blessed One;* for so is he too. But it is in his hand as belonging to his office of Mediator between God and man, as was before said. And properly the phrase signifies ministerial power, being a

[1] Weems. [2] Pirke R. Eliezer. edit. per G. H. Vorst. C.F.

manifest allusion to the common usage, in the courts of princes, of entrusting to some great minister the power of the keys; as it was foretold of Eliakim, that he should be placed in the same high station in Hezekiah's court wherein Shebna was, of whom so severe things are there said; and that "the key of the house of David should be laid upon his shoulder,"[1] etc.; and the "house of David" being a known type of the house or church of God, and he himself of Christ, who, "as the Son, hath power over the whole house,"—according to this typical way of speaking, our Lord is said to have "the key of David," to open so as none can shut, to shut so as none can open;[2] that is, to have a final decisive power in all he doth, from which there is no appeal.

Nor could anything be more congruous than that having the keys of the celestial house of God, the heavenly palace of the great King, the "habitation of his holiness and glory," in which are the "everlasting habitations," the "many mansions," the places prepared for his redeemed; he should also have the keys of the terrestrial Bethel, which is but a sort of portal, or *vestibulum*, to the other; "the house of God, and the gate of heaven." And as he is implied to have the keys of this introductive, preparatory kingdom of heaven (as the keys of the King's palace, where is the throne or seat of government, and the keys of the kingdom, must mean the same thing), when he is said to give them to the apostle Peter and the other apostles,—this was but a prelude and a minute instance of his power of those keys of hades, and of the glorious heavenly kingdom itself contained therein, which he was not to delegate, but to manage himself immediately in his own person.

If moreover He were signified by the angel, who was said to "have the key of the bottomless pit;"[3] *that* also must import a power, though great in itself, yet very little in comparison of the immense hades, of which he is here said to have the keys. So remote is it that the power ascribed to him there, should be the measure of what he here asserts to

[1] Isa. xxii. 20–22. [2] Rev. iii. 7. [3] Rev. xx. 1.

himself! And the difference must be vastly greater than it is possible for us to conceive or parallel, by the difference between having power over the palace and all the most delightful and most spacious territories in the vastest empire of the greatest prince, and only having power over a dungeon in some obscure corner of it; which for the great purposes, whereto all this is to be applied, we can scarcely too much inculcate.

And, SECONDLY, to such application let us now, with all possible seriousness and intention of spirit, address ourselves; which will consist in sundry inferences or deductions, laying before us some suitable matter, partly of our meditation; partly for our practice: the former whereof are to prepare, and lay a ground for the latter.

I. Divers things we may collect that will be very proper for our deep meditation; which I shall propose, not as things that we can be supposed not to have known before, but which are, too commonly, not enough thought on or considered.

And here we shall somewhat invert the order wherein things lie in the text, beginning with what is there latter and lower, and thence arising, with more advantage, to what is higher and of greater concernment: as;

1. *That men do not die at random,* or by some uncertain accidental by-stroke that, as by a slip of the hand, cuts off the thread of life; but by an act of Divine determination and judgment, that passes in reference to each one's death. For as the key signifies authority and power, the turning this key of death, that gives a man his exit out of this world, is an authoritative act. And do we consider in what hand this power is lodged? we cannot but apprehend every such act is the effect of counsel and judgment.

What philosophers are wont to discourse of fortuitous events in reference to rational agents, or casual in reference to natural, must be understood but with relation to ourselves, and signifies only our own ignorance of futurities; but can have no place in the all-comprehending mind, as if anything were a contingency unto *that.* For them that live as if they

thought they came into this world by chance, it is very natural to them to think they shall die and go out of it by chance too; but *when* and *as* it happens. This is worse than paganish blindness: for besides what from their poets the vulgar have been made to believe concerning the 'three fatal sisters,' to whom they ascribed no less than deity concerned in measuring every one's life,—the grave discourses which some of them have written concerning 'Providence,' and its extent to the lesser intermediate concerns of life, much more to that their final great concern of death, will be a standing testimony against the too-prevailing Christian scepticism (they ought to excuse the solecism who make it) of this wretched age! But such among us as will allow themselves the liberty to *think*, want not opportunity and means by which they may be assured, that not an imaginary, but real Deity is immediately and constantly concerned in measuring our time in this world. What an awful thought is this! And it leads to a second inference:—

2. *That it is a great thing to die.* The Son of God, the Redeemer of man, hath an immediate presidency over this affair. *He* signalizes himself by it, who could not suppose he should be magnified by a trifle! We slightly say, 'Such a one is dead!' Consider the matter in itself, and it is great. A reasonable soul hath changed states! An intelligent spirit is gone out of our world! The life of a gnat, a fly, those little automata or self-moving things, how admirable a production is it! It becomes no man to despise what no man can imitate. We praise the pencil that well describes the external figure of such an animalculum, such a little creature; but the internal, vital, self-moving power, and the motion itself, what art can express? But a human life,—how important a thing is it! It was one of Plato's thanksgivings, 'that God had made him a man!' How careful a guard hath God set over every man's life, fencing it by the severest law! "If any man shed man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;" and how weighty is the annexed reason! "For in the image of God made he man." This then highly greatens

this matter. He therefore reserves it wholly to himself, as one of his *peculiarities*, to dispose of such a life! "I am he that kills and makes alive." We find it one of his high titles, "The God of the spirits of all flesh." He had what was much greater to glory in, that he was "the Father of spirits," indefinitely spoken. When he hath all the heavenly regions, the spacious hades, peopled with such inhabitants "whose dwelling is not with flesh," and, for vast multitudes of them, that never was;—that yet, looking down into this little world of ours, this minute spot of his creation, and observing that here were "spirits dwelling in flesh," he should please to be styled also the God of those spirits, signifies this to be with him too, an appropriate glory; a glory which he will not communicate farther than he communicates Godhead: and that he held it a Divine right to measure the time unto each of them of their abode in flesh, and determine when they shall dislodge.

This cannot be thought on aright, without a becoming, most profound *reverence* of him on this account. How sharp a rebuke is given to that haughty prince, "The God in whose hands thy breath is . . . hast thou not glorified."[1] That would prepare the way, and we should be easily led on, were we once come to think with *reverence*, to think also with *pleasure*, of this case, that our life, and every breath we draw, is under such a Divine superintendency. The holy psalmist speaks of it with high complacency, as the matter of "his song," that he had a God presiding over his life. So he tells us he would have each *νυχθήμερον* composed not more of night and day, than of prayer and praise directed to God under this notion,—"as the God of his life."[2] And he speaks it not grudgingly, but as the ground of his trust and boast: "I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand."[3] That this key is in the hand of the great Emmanuel, God with us, will be thought on with frequency, when it is thought on with delight.

3. Our life on earth is under the constant *strict observation*

[1] Dan. v. 23. [2] Ps. xlii. 8. [3] Ps. xxxi. 14, 15.

of our Lord Christ. He waits when to turn the key, and shut it up. Through the whole of that time, which, by deferring, he measures out to us, we are under his eye as in a state of probation. He takes continual notice how we acquit ourselves. For his turning the key at last, is a judicial act; therefore supposes diligent observation, and proceeds upon it. He that hath this key is also said, in the next chapter, "to have eyes like a flame of fire;" with these he observes what "he hath against" one or another; and with most indulgent patience "gives a space of repentance,"[1] and notes it down, if any then "repent not," as we there also find. Did secure sinners consider this, how he beholds them with a flame in his eye, and the key in his hand, would they dare still to trifle? If they did apprehend how he, in this posture, stands over them, in all their vain dalliances, idle impertinencies, bold adventures, insolent attempts against his laws and government, presumptuous affronts of his high authority; yea, or but in their drowsy slumberings, their lingering delays, their neglects of offered grace: did they consider what notice he takes how they demean themselves under every sermon they hear, in every prayer wherein they are to join with others, or which perhaps, for custom's sake, they put up alone by themselves: how their hearts are moved or unmoved by every repeated call that is given them to turn to God, and get their peace made by application of their Redeemer's reconciling blood;—in what agonies would they be, what pangs of trembling would they feel within themselves, lest the key should turn before their great work be done!

4. Whatsoever ill designs by this *observation* he discovers, it is easy to him to prevent. One turn of this key of death—besides the many other ways that are obvious to him—disappoints them all, "and in that day all their thoughts perish." It is not therefore from inadvertency, indifferency, or impotency, but deep counsel, that they are permitted to be driven on so far. "He that sitteth in the heavens laughs," and "he knows their day is coming." He can turn this key when he will.

[1] Rev. ii. 18, 20, 21.

5. His power as to every one's death cannot be *avoided or withstood*. The act of this key is definitive, and ends the business. "No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; nor hath he power in the day of death."[1] It is in vain to struggle when the key is turned; the power of the keys, where it is supremely lodged, is absolutely decisive, and their effect permanent and irrevocable. That soul therefore for whose exit the key is turned, must thereupon then forthwith depart, willing or unwilling, ready or unready.

6. Souls that go out of this world of ours, on the turn of this key, *go not out of being*. He that hath this key of death, hath also the key of hades, a key and a key. When he uses the former, to let them out from this, he uses the latter, to give them their inlet into the other world, and into the one or the other part of it; into the upper or the lower hades, as the state of their case is, and doth require.

Our business is not now with pagans, to whom the oracles of God are unknown. If it were, the best and wisest of them who so commonly speak of souls going into hades, never thought of their going no whither, nor therefore that they were nothing. They had reasons then, which they thought cogent, that induced them, though unassisted with Divine revelation, to conclude they survived their forsaken bodies. And what else could any unbribed understanding conclude or conceive, when we find they have powers belonging to them which we can much more easily apprehend capable of being acted, without help from the body, than by it? We are sure they can form thoughts, purposes, desires, hopes; for it is matter of fact, they do it; and coherent thoughts, and thoughts arising from thoughts, one from another; yea and thoughts abstracted from anything corporeal, the notions of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, of moral good, and evil, with some agreeable resolves; thoughts quite above the sphere of matter, so as to form a notion of the mind itself, of a spiritual being, as unexceptionable a one as we can form of a body; yea of an original self-subsistent

[1] Eccles. viii. 8.

Mind and Spirit, the Former and Maker of all other. It is much more apprehensible, since we certainly know that all this is done, that it is done without any help of the body, than how flesh, or blood, or bones, or nerves, or brains, or any corporeal thing, should contribute to such methods of thinking, or to any thought at all. And if it can be conceived that a spirit can *act* without dependence on a body, what should hinder but we may as well conceive it to *subsist and live* without such dependence? And when we find this power of thought belongs to somewhat in us that lives, (since the deserted carcase thinks not,) how reasonable is it to suppose, as the body lives not of itself, or life is not essential to it,—for life may be retired and gone, and *it* remain, as we see it doth, the same body still,—that the soul to which the power of thought belongs lives of itself, not independently on the first cause, but essentially; so as to receive life and essence together from that cause, or life included in its essence, so as that it shall be the same thing to it to *be* and to *live*. And hereupon how obvious is it to apprehend that the soul is such a thing as can live in the body—which when it doth, the body lives by it a precarious borrowed life—and that can live out of the body, leaving it, when it doth so, to drop and die.

These sentiments were so reasonable as generally to prevail with the more deeply thinking part of mankind—philosophers of all sorts, a few excepted, whose notions were manifestly formed by vicious inclination—in the pagan world, where was nothing higher than reason to govern. But we have "life and immortality brought to light in the gospel,"[1] and are forewarned by it that these will be the measures of the final judgment,—to give "eternal life" at last "to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek honour, glory, and immortality;"[2] to the rest, "indignation and wrath,"[3] etc., because "there is no respect of persons with God:"[4] as supposing the discovery of another world, even by *natural* light (much more by the addition of *supernatural*), to be so clear, as

[1] 2 Tim. i. 10. [2] Rom. ii. 7. [3] Ver. 8. [4] Ver. 11.

that the rule of the universal judgment, even for all, is most righteously to be taken from hence, and that there is nothing but a resolution of living wickedly to be opposed to it.

It is also no slight consideration that a susceptibleness of religion should among the creatures that dwell on earth be so appropriate and peculiar to man, and (some rare instances excepted) as far diffused as human nature; so as to induce some very considering men, of the ancients as well as moderns, both pagans and Christians, to think religion the more probable specifying difference of man, than reason. And whence should so common an impression be, but from a cause as common? Or how can we avoid to think that this signature upon the soul of man, a capacity of religion, should be from the same hand that "formed the spirit of man within him," and that a natural religiousness and human nature itself had the same Author. But who sees not that religion *as such*, hath a final reference to a future state? He was no despicable writer (though not a Christian) that positively affirmed 'hope towards God to be essential to man; and that they that had it not, were not partakers of the rational nature.'[1]

It is so much the more a deplorable and monstrous thing that so many, not only against the light of their own reason, but of Divine revelation, are so industrious to *unman* themselves; and having so effectually in a great degree done it really and in practice, aim to do it in a more compendious way notionally and in principle too: and make use (or show) of reason to prove themselves not to be reasonable creatures, or to divest themselves of the principal dignity and distinction of the rational nature: and are incomparably herein more unnatural than such as we commonly count felons upon themselves, who only act against their own bodily life, but these against the much nobler life of their soul: *they* against the life of an individual; *these* against their own whole species, at once. And how deplorable is their case, that count it their interest to be in no possibility of being happy; when

[1] Philo Judæus. Quod deter. potiori insid. soleat. ὡς τῶν μὴ ἐλπιζόντων ἐπὶ Θεὸν, λογικῆς φύσεως οὐ μεμοιραμένων.

yet their so great dread of a future state, as to urge them upon doing the most notorious violence to their own faculties to rid themselves of it, is a very convictive argument of its reality. For their dread still pursues, and sticks close to them. This shows it lies deep in the nature of things, which they cannot alter. The terrible image is still before their eyes; and their principal refuge lies only in diverting, in not attending to, it. And they can so little trust to their own sophistical reasonings against it, that when they have done all they can, they must owe what they have of ease and quiet in their own minds, not so much to any strength of reason they apprehend in their own thoughts, as in not thinking. A bold jest may sometimes provoke others' laughter, when it doth not extinguish their own fear. A suspicion, a *formido oppositi*, will still remain; a misgiving, that they cannot nullify the great hades, pull down the spacious fabric of heaven or undermine the profound abyss of hell by a profane scoff. They will in time discern the difference between the evanid passion of a sudden fright that takes its rise from imagination, and the fixed dread which is founded in the reason of things: as one may between a fright in a dream, and the dread of a condemned criminal, with whom, sleeping and waking, the real state of his case is still the same. Nor are the things themselves remote or unconnected—God's right to punish a reasonable creature that hath lived in contempt of Him, and his own reasonable apprehension hereof, or his conscience both of the fact and desert. They answer as face to face, as the stamp on the seal, and the impression on the wax. They would fain make their reason a protection against their fear, but that cannot serve both ways. The reason of the thing lies against them already, and there cannot be an eternal war between the faculty and the object. One way or other the latter will overpower the former, and draw it into consent with itself: either by letting it see there is a just true cause of fear, or—assisted by Divine grace—prevail for the change of the sinner's course. Whereupon that troublesome fear and its cause will both upon the best

terms cease together: and that what hath been proposed to consideration under this head, may be the more effectually considered to this blessed purpose, I add that,

7. The discovery of the invisible world and the disposal of affairs there, have a most *encouraging aspect* upon this world. For both the discovery and the disposal are by our blessed Redeemer, in whom mercy and might are met in highest perfection. How fragrant breathings of grace, how glorious a display of power are there, in what he here says, "Fear not! I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and I am alive for evermore, Amen. And I have the keys of hades and of death." He hath opened the celestial hades to our view, that it might be also open to our safe entrance and blissful inhabitation. "He who was dead, but liveth," and had made his victorious, triumphant entrance before us and for us: he who had overcome him "that had the power of death"—conquered the gigantic monster at the gate, gained the keys, and designed herein their deliverance from the "fear of death," who were thereby "subject to bondage;"[1] he who hath "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel;"[2]—it is he who bids us lift up our eyes, and behold the heavens opened, and himself standing at the right hand of God. The horrid, *infernal* hades he hath discovered too, only that we might fear and shun it. But yet more distinctly consider, why doth he here represent himself under this character, "He that liveth and was dead," but that he might put us in mind of that most convictive argument of his love, his submitting to die for us,—"Greater love hath no man,"—and that he might at once put us out of doubt concerning his *power*, that he yet survives, and is sprung up alive out of that death, victorious over it? How amiable is the representation of such power in conjunction with such love! The same person having a heart so replenished with love, a hand so armed with power, neither capable of unkind design or unable to effect the most kind! Behold him in this representation! Who would not now fall

[1] Heb. ii. 14, 15. [2] 2 Tim. i. 10.

at his foot and adore? Who would hesitate at resigning to him, or be appalled at his disclosure of this unknown world?

Do but consider him who makes the discovery, and who would not expect from him the utmost efforts of love and goodness? From him who is "the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person,"—*his* essential image who is Love! From him who came into this wretched world of ours, "full of grace and truth," and who could not have come but by the inducement of compassion to our miseries! From him who knows all things, and whose eye penetrates into every recess of the vast hades—all his own empire, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; but who only knows not to deceive: who hath told us, "in his Father's house are many mansions: and if it were not so, would have told us" that.[1] From him into whose mouth "guile never entered," but into whose "lips grace was poured," and is poured out by them; so that the ear that hath heard him hath borne him witness, and filled with wonder those that heard the "gracious words which came out of his mouth:" who hath told us all concerning that unseen world, that in this our present state it was fit for us to know; and enough, in telling all that will be his followers, that "where he is, there he will have them be."[2]

And consider the manifest tendency of the discovery itself. What doth it mean or tend to, but to undeceive miserable mortals, whom he beholds from his high throne mocked with shadows, beguiled with most delusive impostures, and easily apt to be imposed upon? "Foolish, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures;" "feeding upon ashes," and wearying themselves for very vanity; sporting themselves in the dust of this minute spot of earth; wasting their little inch of time, wherein they should prepare for translation into the regions of unseen glory! To these he declares he hath formed a kingdom for all that covet to mend their states, and that "his kingdom is not of this world;" that for such as will be of this kingdom, he will provide better, having other

[1] John xiv. 2. [2] John xvii. 24.

worlds, the many heavens above all which he is ascended, at his dispose.[1] But they must seek "this kingdom" and "the righteousness of it in the first place," and desist from their care about other things. He counsels and warns them not to lay up their treasure on earth, but in heaven, and to let their hearts be there with their treasure. And what can withstand his power who, having been dead, liveth victorious over "him that had the power of death;" and "is alive for evermore," possessed of an eternal state of life.

And have we not reason to expect the most equal and most benign disposal of things in that unseen world, when he also declares, 'I have the keys,—rightful authority as well as mighty power,—to reward and punish?' None but who have a very ill mind can fear from him an ill management. He first became capable of dying, and then yielded himself to die, that he might obtain these keys for gracious purposes. He had them before to execute just vengeance, as he was originally in "the form of God," and without "robbery equal with God;" an equal sharer in sustaining the wrong that had been done by apostate rebels, and an equal sharer in the right of vindicating it.

But that he might have these keys to open the heavenly hades to reduced apostates, to penitent, believing, self-devoting sinners,—for this it was necessary, he should put on man, "be found here in fashion as a man, take on him the form of a servant, become obedient to death," (even that servile punishment,) "the death of the cross."[2] For this he is highly exalted into this power, that every knee might bow to him, in hope of saving mercy.[3] He had the keys, without this, of the supernal hades,—to shut out all offenders; and of the infernal,—to shut them up for ever. But that he might have them to absolve repenting believers and admit them into heaven, and only to shut up in hell implacable enemies,—for this he must die, and live again. "He was to be slain and hanged on a tree," that he might be a "Prince and a Saviour

[1] Ephes. iv. 10. [2] Phil. ii. 7, 8.
[3] Phil. ii. 9, 10, compared with Isa. xlv. 22, 23.

to give repentance and remission of sins :" [1] that to this intent he might be "Lord of the dead and the living," he must both die and rise, and live so as to die no more.[2] These keys for this purpose, he was only to have upon these terms. He had a right to punish as an offended God; but to pardon and save, as a mediating, sin-expiating "God-man."

But as he was to do the part of a Mediator, he must act equally between the disagreeing parties. He was to deal impartially on both sides; to render back *entire* to the injured Ruler of the world his violated rights, and to obtain for us his forfeited favour *as* entire: and undertook therefore, when as a sacrifice he was to "be slain, to redeem us to God by his blood,"[3] to give him back his revolted creature, holy, pure, subject, and serviceable, as by his methods he shall be at last; and procure for him pardon, acceptance, and eternal blessedness.

When, therefore, he was to do for us the part of a Redeemer, he was to redeem us from the curse of the law, not from the command of it; to save us from the wrath of God, not from his government.[4] Had it been otherwise, so firm and indissoluble is the connection between our duty and our felicity, that the Sovereign Ruler had been eternally injured, and we not advantaged. Were we to have been set free from the preceptive obligation of God's holy law, and most of all from that most fundamental precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, soul, might, and mind," —had this been redemption, which supposes only what is evil and hurtful, as that we are to be redeemed from? This were a strange sort of self-repugnant redemption, not from sin and misery, but from our duty and felicity. This were so to be redeemed as to be still lost, and every way lost; both to God and to ourselves for ever. Redeemed from loving God! What a monstrous thought! Redeemed from what is the great active and fruitive principle; the source of obedience and blessedness; the eternal spring, even in the heavenly

[1] Acts v. 30, 31. [2] Rom. xiv. 9. [3] Rev. v. 9.
[4] Gal. iii. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 3, 4.

state, of adoration and fruition! This had been to legitimate everlasting enmity and rebellion against the blessed God, and to redeem us into an eternal hell of horror and misery to ourselves! This had been to cut off from the Supreme Ruler of the world for ever so considerable a limb of his most rightful dominion, and to leave us as miserable as everlasting separation from the Fountain of life and blessedness could make us.

When, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ was to redeem us from the curse of the law, it was that the promised Spirit might be given to us,[1] who should "write the law in our hearts,"[2] "fulfil the righteousness of it in us," by causing us to walk after his dictates according to that law, regenerating us, begetting us after God's image, and making us partakers of a Godlike nature: so we "through the law become dead" to the malediction and curse of it, "that we may live to God" more devoted lives than ever.[3] Thus is God's lost creature given back to him with the greatest advantage also to itself.

With this design it is apparent our Lord redeemed us, and by his redemption acquired these keys. Nor are we to doubt but in the use of them, he will dispense exactly according to this just and merciful design. And what a perverse, distorted mind is that, which can so much as wish it should be otherwise; namely, that he should save us to the eternal wrong of him that made us, and so as that we should be nothing the better, that is, that he should save us without saving us!

And hath this no pleasant, comfortable aspect upon a lost world? that he who hath these keys will use them for such purposes, that is, to admit to eternal bliss "and save to the uttermost all that will come to God by him,"—not willing to be everlastingly alienated from the life of God,—"because he ever lives to make intercession;" or to transact and negotiate for them (as that word signifies) and that in a rightful way, and even by the power of these keys?

8. That there must be some important reason why the

[1] Gal. iii. 13, 14. [2] Jer. xxxi. 33; Ezek. xxxvi. 27.
[3] Gal. ii. 19.

other world is to us *unseen*, and so truly bears the name of hades. This expresses the state of the case as in fact it is, that it is a world lying out of our sight, and into which our dim and weak eye cannot penetrate. That other state of things is spoken of therefore as hidden from us by a veil. When our Lord Jesus is said to have "passed into the heavens,"[1] he is also said "to have entered into that within the veil,"[2] alluding to that in the temple of Solomon, and before that, in Moses' tabernacle; but expressly signifying that the holy places into which Christ entered, "not those made with hands, which were the figure of the true, but heaven itself," filled with the glorious presence of God, where he appears for us,[3] is also veiled from us: as also the glory of the other state is said to be a glory as yet "to be revealed."[4] And we are told, the great God "holdeth back the face of his throne;"[5] and above,[6] it is represented as a Divine prerogative, that "sheol," (which is there groundlessly rendered "hell,") the vast hades, is only "naked before him," lies entirely open to his view; and therein the dark and horrid part of it, "Destruction"—by which peculiarly must be meant "hell"—is "to him without a covering," not more hidden from his eye.

Which shows this to be the Divine pleasure: so God will have it be, who could have exposed all to common view if he had pleased.

But because he orders all things "according to the counsel of his own will,"[7] we must conceive some weighty reason did induce hereto,—that whatsoever lies beyond this present state of things should be concealed from our immediate view, and so come *uno nomine* to be all called "hades." And if the reason of God's conduct, and the course of his dispensation herein, had been equally hidden, as that state itself is, it had been a bold presumption to inquire and pry into it; modesty and reverence should have restrained us. But when we find it holds a manifest agreement with other parts of his counsel

[1] Heb. iv. 14. [2] Heb. vi. 19, 20. [3] Heb. ix. 24. [4] Rom. viii. 18. [5] Job xxvi. 9. [6] Ver. 6. [7] Ephes. i. 11.

that are sufficiently revealed, and that the excellency of the Divine Wisdom is most conspicuous and principally to be beheld and admired in ordering the apt congruities and correspondencies of things with each other, and especially of the ends he proposes to himself with the methods and ways he takes to effect them; it were very great oscitancy and an undutiful negligence not to observe them when they stand in view, that we may render him his due acknowledgments and honour thereupon.

It is manifest that as God did not create man at first in that which He designed to be his final state, but as a probationer, in a state of trial in order to a further state: so when he apostatized and fell from God, He was graciously pleased to order for him a new trial, and put him into the hands of his merciful Redeemer, who is entrusted with these "keys" and with the power of life and death over him, to be managed and exercised according to the terms plainly set down and declared in His gospel. Wheresoever He is with sufficient evidence revealed and made known, men immediately come under obligation to believe in him, to entrust and commit themselves into the same hands; to rely upon the truth of his word in everything he *reveals*, as the ground of their submitting to his authority in everything he *requires*. What concerns their present practice, he hath plainly shown them; so much as it was requisite they should pre-apprehend of future retributions, rewards and punishments, he hath revealed also; not that they should have the knowledge hereof by immediate inspection, but by taking his word: that as their first transgression was founded in infidelity—that they did not believe God, but a lying spirit against him—their first step in their recovery and return to God, should be to believe him, and take his word about things they have themselves no immediate sight or knowledge of. This point was by no means to be quitted to the first apostates; as if God's saying to them, 'If you transgress, "you shall die," or go into hades,' was no sufficient enforcement of the precept, unless he had given them a distinct view of the

states of felicity or misery which their obedience or disobedience would lead them into. This had been to give away the whole cause to the revolted rebels, and rather to confess error and oversight in the Divine government, than impute fault to the impugners of it!

This being the state of the case, how suitable had it been to the design of this second trial to be made with men, to withdraw the veil, and let every one's own eyes be their informers of all the glories of the heavenly state, and hereupon proclaim and preach the gospel to them, that they should all partake herein, that would entirely deny themselves, come off from their own bottom, give themselves up absolutely to the interest, love, service and communion of their Redeemer, and of God in him? to fortify them against the assaults and dangers of their earthly pilgrimage by reversing that rule, "The just shall live by faith,"—even *that* "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen?"[1] or by inverting the method, that in reference to such things, "we are to walk by faith, not by sight,"[2] and letting it be, we are to walk by sight, not by faith? and that, lest any should refuse such compliance with their great Lord, whole *hades* should be no longer so, but "made naked" before them, and the "covering of hell and destruction" be taken off, and their own eyes behold the infernal horrors, and their own ears hear the shrieks and howlings of accursed creatures, that having rejected their Redeemer are rejected by him? We are not here to consider, what course would most certainly effect their salvation, but what most became the wise, holy God, to preserve the dignity of his own government and save them too; otherwise Almighty power could save all at once. As therefore we have cause to acknowledge the kindness and compassion of our blessed Lord, who hath these keys, in giving us, for the kind, *such* notices as he hath, of the state of the things in hades; so we have equal cause to admire his wisdom, that he gives us not those of *another* kind, that should

[1] Heb. x. 38; xi. 1. [2] 2 Cor. v. 7.

more powerfully strike the sense and amaze us more, but instruct us less. That continues it to be hades still, a state of things to us unseen as yet. As the case would have been on the other supposition, the most generous noble part of our religion had been sullied or lost, and "the trial of our faith . . . which is to be found unto praise, honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," even upon this account, "that they who had not seen him" in his mean circumstances on earth, nor did *now* "see him," amidst all the glories of his exalted state, "yet *believing*, loved him, and rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory,"[1]—this faith, and all the glorious trials of it, with its admirable achievements and performances, whereby the elders heretofore obtained so good a report[2] and high renown on earth, and which filled the world with wonder, had all vanished into obscurity and darkness; that is, if they had believed no more or no greater things, than every man besides had the immediate view of by his own eyesight.

And yet the trial had been greater on another account, than the Divine Wisdom, in conjunction with goodness and compassion, thought fit ordinarily to put sincere Christians upon. For who could with any tolerable patience have endured longer abode on earth, after they should once have had the glory of the heavenly state immediately set in view before their eyes; especially considering, not so much the sufferings, as the impurities of their present state! What, for great reason, was a special vouchsafement to one apostle was, for as great, not to be common to all Christians. How great is the wisdom and mercy of our blessed Lord in this partial concealment of our future state, and that while so much as is sufficient is revealed, there is yet a *hades* upon it, and it may still be said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."[3]

But as these majestic, life-breathing words of our great Lord do plainly offer the things that have been mentioned—and many more such that might occur—to our thoughts and

[1] 1 Pet. i. 7, 8. [2] Heb. xi. 2. [3] 1 John iii. 2.

meditation; so will they be thought on in vain, if they be not followed and answered by suitable dispositions and actions of heart and life. Therefore the further use we are to make of this great subject will be to lay down,—

II. Divers *correspondent* things to be practised and done, which must also suppose dispositions and frames of heart and spirit agreeable thereto.

1. Let us live expecting a period to be ere long put to our life on earth. For remember, there are keys put into a great hand for this very purpose, that holds them not in vain. His power is of equal extent with the law he is to proceed by; and by *that* it is "appointed unto men once to die."[1] Therefore as in the execution, he cannot exceed, so he will not come short of this appointment: when that *once* shall be, it belongs to him to determine. And from the course we may observe him to hold, as it is uncertain to all, it can be very remote to none. How short is the measure of a span! It is an absurd vanity to promise ourselves that which is in the power of another. How wise and prudent a thing to accommodate ourselves composedly to his pleasure, in whose power we are, and to live as men continually expecting to die! There are "bands of death" out of which, when they once take hold, we cannot free ourselves. But there are also "bands of life," not less troublesome or dangerous. It is our great concern to be daily, by degrees, loosening and disentangling ourselves from these bands; and, for preventing the necessity of a violent rupture, to be daily disengaging our hearts from an ensnaring world, and the too close embraces of an over-indulged body. Tell them resolutely, 'I must leave them, whensoever my great Lord turns the key for me, and I know not how soon that may be.' It is equally unhappy and foolish to be engaged in the pursuit of an impossibility or in a war with necessity; the former whereof cannot be obtained, the latter cannot but overcome. We owe so much to ourselves and to the ease and quiet of our own minds, to be reconciled at all times to that which

[1] Heb. ix. 27.

may befal us at any time. How confounding a thing is surprisal by that which ourselves regret and dread! How unaccountable and ignominious must it be to pretend to be surprised with what we have so great reason always to expect, and whereof we are so oft forewarned! Is it no part of Christian watchfulness to wait for such an hour? Though that "waiting all the days of our appointed time," mentioned Job xiv. 14, refers to another change than that of death, namely—as the foregoing and following verses show—that of the resurrection, yet it cannot but be equally requisite upon a no less important reason. And the requests, that the Lord would "make us know our end, and the measure of our days, that we may know how frail we are,"[1] and "that he would teach us so to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom,"[2] are equally monitory to the same purpose as the most express precepts: as also the many directions we have to watch and wait for our Lord's appearance and coming are as applicable to this purpose. For whensoever his key opens our passage out of this world and these bodies, *hades* opens too; and he particularly appears to us in as decisive a judgment of our case, as his universal appearance and judgment will at last give for all. The placid agreement of our minds and spirits with Divine determination, both as to the thing and time of our departure hence, will prevent the trouble and ungratefulness of being surprised; and our continual *expectation* of it, will prevent any surprisal at all. Let this then be an agreed resolution with us, to endeavour being in such a posture, as that we may be capable of saying, 'Lord, whensoever thou shalt move thy key, and tell me, "This night," or this hour, "I will require thy soul," thou shalt not, O Lord, prevent mine expectation, or ever find me counting upon "many years'" enjoyment of anything this world can entertain me with.'

In further pursuance hereof,

2. Be not *over-intent* on designs for this present world; which would suppose you to count upon long abode in it.

[1] Ps. xxxix. 4. [2] Ps. xc. 12.

Let them be always laid with a supposition you may this way, even by one turn of this key, be prevented of bringing them about; and let them be pursued with indifferency, so as that disappointment even this way may not be a grievance. A thing made up of thought and design, as our mind and spirit naturally is, will be designing one way or other; nor ought we to attempt that violence upon our own natures as to endeavour the stupifying of the intelligent, designing mind, which the Author of nature hath put into us. Only let us so lay our designs as that how many soever we form that may be liable to this sort of disappointment, we may still have *one*, greater and more important, so regularly and surely laid, that no turn of this key shall be in any possibility to frustrate, but promote it rather. The design for "the kingdom of God" to be first sought, with "his righteousness,"[1] or which is pursued "by seeking glory, honour, and immortality," to the actual attainment of eternal life,[2] may, if prescribed methods be duly observed, have this felicity always attending it,—to be successfully pursued while we live, and *effected* when we die.

But this is an unaccountable "vanity under the sun," that men too generally form such projects that they are disappointed, both when they do not compass them and when they do. If they do not, they have lost their labour; if they do, they are not worth it. "They dream they are eating," and enjoying the fruit of their labour, but "they awake, and their soul is empty." And if at length they think of laying wiser and more valuable designs, the *key* turns, and not having fixed their resolution and begun aright, they and all their thoughts, foolish or more wise, perish together. Because there is a fit season for every fit undertaking, a "time and judgment for every purpose," or a critical time, such as is by judgment affixed to every such purpose,[3] and because also men "know not their time, therefore their misery is great upon the earth;" and "as birds caught in a snare, they are snared in an evil time that falleth suddenly

[1] Matt. vi. 33. [2] Rom. ii. 7. [3] Eccles. viii. 6.

upon them."[1] O miserable, miserable mortals! So are your immortal spirits misemployed and lost!

Their most valuable design for another world is seldom thought on in season; their little designs for this world they contrive and prosecute with that confidence as if they thought the world to be theirs, and themselves their own, and they "had no Lord over them." This rude insolence that holy apostle animadverts upon;—of such as say, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas they know not what shall be on the morrow. And what is their life? A vapour," etc. So much of duty and becoming behaviour is in the meantime forgotten, as to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live,"[2] etc. This is to bear themselves as absolute masters of their own lives. How bold an affront to their Sovereign Lord! They feel themselves well in health, strength, and vigour, and seem resolved it shall be a trial of skill who hath the power, or to whom the *keys* belong, till it come to the last irrefragable demonstration, that he "changes their countenance and sends them away,"[3] and then they go driven, "plucked," and torn "away from their dwelling-place, rooted out of the land of the living."[4]

But if any premonitory decays make them doubt the perpetuity of their own abode here, they somewhat ease their minds by the pleasure they take in thinking, when they have filled "their own bellies,"[5] what they shall "leave of their substance to their babes," and to them that shall come after: "and their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names," and "their posterity approve their sayings,"[6]—think and act as wisely as they. Thus they take upon them; and reckon, they for their time, and theirs after them, shall still dwell in their own. A wise thought! They are the owners when another keeps the keys.

[1] Eccles. ix. 12. [2] Jas. iv. 13—15. [3] Job xiv. 20. [4] Ps. lii. 55. [5] Ps. xvii. 14. [6] Ps. xlix. 11, 13.

Several other things of like import I shall more lightly touch, that may be collected from what hath been already more largely said, and leave to be further enlarged upon in your own thoughts; and shall dilate more upon some other, as they are either more material, or less thought on by the most.

3. Be not *prodigal of your time* on earth, which is so little in your power. Because you are not to expect much, make the best use you can of your little. It is so precious a thing that it is to be "redeemed," it is therefore too precious to be embezzled and trifled away. The connexion of those two precepts, of "walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," and that of "redeeming the time,"[1] more than intimates that to squander time is a foolish thing. Of the several sorts of things that we make ourselves, their shape and frame show their use and end. Are we to make a less judicious estimate of the works of God? If we therefore contemplate ourselves, and consider what a sort of production man is, can we allow ourselves to think God made him a reasonable creature on purpose to play the fool? Or can we live as if we thought so, without reproaching our Maker? But whereas he who hath been the Author to us of such a *nature*,—capable of improving a life's time in this world unto most valuable purposes,—hath also been the Author of such a *law*, requiring us to "redeem time;" the reproach will be wholly turned off from him upon ourselves, and our consequent ruin be upon our own guilty heads. And he will find some among ourselves, who by the advantage only of the reasonable nature common to us and them are instructors to us, not to waste our days in vanity, and will be witnesses against us if we so foolishly consume what we cannot command.

Some such have unanswerably reprehended the common folly of those that dread the thought of throwing away their whole life at once, that yet have no regret at throwing it all away by parcels and piecemeal; and have told us a wise man

[1] Ephes. v. 15, 16.

can find nothing of that value, for which to barter away his time.[1]

And we are to consider, that as we are reasonable creatures, we are accountable. That we are shut up in these bodies, as in workhouses; that when he that keeps the keys lets us out, we are to "receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether good or evil;"[2] that it belongs to him that measures our time to censure it too, and the use we have made of it.

4. Let Him be at once both *great* and *amiable* in our eyes, who hath so absolute power over us, and so gracious propensions towards us; that is, who hath these keys, and who acquired them with so merciful intentions; even upon such terms as could not but signify the greatest compassion and good will towards such as we.

Reconsider what hath been offered as matter of meditation, to both these purposes. And now hereupon let us endeavour to have a correspondent sense inwrought into our hearts, and to bear ourselves towards him accordingly. The power and efficacy of whole Christianity depends upon this, and doth very principally consist in it. What a faint, impotent, languishing thing is our religion, how doth it dwindle into spiritless, dead form, without it! Either the "form of knowledge" is nothing else but insipid dead notion, or our forms of worship only fruitless unpleasant formality, if we have not a vivid sense in our hearts both of his glorious greatness and of his excellent loving-kindness. As much as words can signify towards the impressing such a sense into our hearts, we have in *these* words, uttered from his own mouth; so that he may say as that memorable type of him once did, you may plainly perceive "it is my mouth that speaketh to you."[3] "I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." And hereto he now sets his solemn ratifying seal, *Amen*. Wherewith he

[1] Neque quicquam reperit dignum, quod cum tempore suo permutaret.—*Sen.*

[2] 2 Cor. v. 10.

[3] Gen. xlv.

leaves us to pause, and collect that *thus* it was brought about that he could add, 'And I have the keys of the vast hades, the whole unseen world, and of death.'

And God forbid that, now, these words should be with us an empty sound or a dead letter! "Let us cast in our minds what manner of salutation this should be." Doth the Son of God thus vouchsafe to bespeak miserable abjects, perishing, lost wretches? How can we hereupon but bow our heads and worship! What agitations of affection should we feel within! How should all our internal powers be moved! and our whole souls made "as the chariots of Amminadib." What can we now be unwilling of, that he would have us be or do? And as that, whereof we may be assured he is most willing—

5. Let us *entirely receive* him; and *absolutely resign* ourselves to him, as our Prince and Saviour. Who would not covet to be in special relation to so mighty and so kind a Lord? And can you think to be related to him upon other terms? And do you not know that upon these you may, when in his gospel he offers himself, and demands you? What can that mean but that you are to receive him, and resign yourselves? The case is now brought to this state, that you must either comply or rebel. And what? rebel against him who hath these keys, who is in so high authority over the whole unseen world! who is the "head of all principality and power," "who is gone into the heavens," the glorious upper hades, and "is at the right hand of God; angels, authorities, powers being made subject to him!"[1] We little know or can conceive as yet, the several orders and distinctions of the celestial inhabitants, and their great and illustrious princes and potentates, "thrones, dominions," etc., that all pay him a dutiful and a joyful subjection and obedience. But do we not know "God hath given him a name above every name? and that in his name"—or *at* it, as it may be read, that is, in acknowledgment of his sovereign power —"every knee must bow, of things in heaven, on earth and under earth, and all confess that he is Lord, to the praise and

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 22.

glory of God the Father?" And who art thou, perishing wretch! that darest dispute his title? or that, when all the creation must be subject to him, wilt except thyself?

And when it cost him so dear, that his vast power might be subservient to a design of grace, and thou must at last be saved by him or lost for ever,—what can tempt thee to stand out against such power and such grace?

If thou wert to gratify thy ambition, how glorious a thing is it to be a Christian! a subject, a devoted homager to so mighty a Prince! If to provide against thy necessity and distress, what course can be so sure and successful, as to fly for refuge to so compassionate a Saviour? And dost thou not know there must be to this purpose an express transaction between him and thee? Wonder he will condescend to it! To capitulate with dust and ashes! To article with his own creature, with whom he may do what he will! But his merciful condescension herein is declared and known. If there shall be a special relation settled between him and thee, he hath told thee in what way it must be, that is, by way of covenant-transaction and agreement, as he puts his people of old in mind his way was with them; "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine."[1] This I insist upon and press, as a thing of the greatest importance imaginable, and the least thought of: nor *is* the strange incongruity animadverted on, namely, that we have the seals of such a covenant among us, but the covenant itself slips through our hands. Our baptism soon after we were born, with some federal words then, is thought enough, as if we were a nation of always minors. Whoever therefore thou art, that hearest these words or readest these lines; know that the great Lord is *express* towards thee in his gospel proposal: "Wilt thou accept me for thine, and resign thyself as mine?" He now expects and requires thy *express* answer. Take his gospel as from the cross or take it as from the throne, or as from both, it is the same gospel interwoven of grace and authority, the richest grace and the highest

[1] Ezek. xvi. 8.

authority, at once inviting and requiring thee to *commit* and *submit* thyself unto him. Take heed lest his key turn before thou have given thy complying answer, importing at once both thy trust and thy subjection.

Give not over pleading with thyself with thy wayward, stupid heart, till it can say to him, 'Lord, I yield; thou hast overcome,'—till with tender relentings thou hast thrown thyself at his feet and told him, 'Lord, I am ashamed, I am confounded within myself, that thou shouldst die upon a cross to obtain thy high power, and that thou art now ready to use it for the saving so vile a miscreant as I! That when thou hast so vast an unknown world, so numberless myriads of excellent creatures in thy obedience, thou shouldst yet think it worth thy while to look after me! and that I should so long have withstood thy kind and gracious overtures and intendments! O forgive my wicked aversion! I now accept and resign.'

And now this being sincerely done, with fulness of consent, with deep humility, with yearning bowels, with unfeigned thankfulness, and an inward complacency and gladness of heart,—

6. Let your *following course* in this world be ordered agreeably hereto, in continued dependence and subjection. "As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so" we are "to walk in him."[1] Take him according to the titles here given him, as "Christ,"—a Person anointed, authorized, qualified to be both "Jesus," a Saviour,—so we are to walk, according to our first reception of him, in continual dependence on his saving mercy,—and a "Lord," or as it is here expressed with eminency, "the Lord;" so we are to walk in continual subjection to his governing power: otherwise our receiving him, at first, under these notions, hath nothing in it but mockery and collusion.

But if his obtaining these keys upon the terms here expressed, "as having been dead, and now living," and having "overcome death,"[2] did signify his having them for saving purposes,

[1] Col. ii. 6. [2] As it is also Rom. xiv. 9.

—as it must, since for other purposes he had them sufficiently before; and if we reckoned this a reasonable inducement to receive him and commit and entrust ourselves to him as a Saviour, that he died and overcame death—for his grace in yielding to die had not rendered him a competent object of trust, otherwise than in conjunction with his power in overcoming death, and so gaining into his hands these keys:—then, the same reason still remaining, how constant an encouragement have we to continue accordingly walking in him all our days! How potent an argument should it be to us, "to live that life which we live in the flesh, by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us!"[1] that is, inasmuch as having been crucified with him, which is also there expressed, we feel "ourselves to live nevertheless," yet so as that it is not so much "we that live, as Christ that liveth in us;" who could not live *in us*, or be to us a spring of life, if he were not a perpetual spring of life in *himself*.

And consider, how darest thou live otherwise in "this flesh," in this "earthly house," whereof he keeps the keys and can fetch thee out at his pleasure? when he hath warned thee "to abide in him, that when he shall appear, thou mayest have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming."[2] He will certainly then appear, when he comes to open the door, and dislodge thee from "this flesh" (though there be here a further and final reference to another appearance and coming of his); and if he then find thee severed and disjoined from him—thy first closure with him not having been sincere, truly unitive and vital—how terribly will he look, how confounded wilt thou look in that hour!

Neither hast thou less reason to live in continual subjection to him, considering that as he died and overcame death that he might have these keys, so he now hath them, and thou art under his governing power. The more thou considerest his right to govern, the less thou wilt dispute it. When he was spoken of as "a Child to us born," that he might become a "Man of sorrows," and be "sorrowful unto the death," and have

[1] Gal. ii. 20. [2] 1 John ii. 28.

all the sorrows of death come upon him, he is at the same time said to be the "mighty God," and it was declared the "government should be upon his shoulder."[1] As he was the "first begotten from the dead," namely, both submitting to death and conquering it; so he was the "Prince of the kings of the earth," (a small part of his kingdom too,) his throne being founded on his cross, his governing power in his sacrifice; that is, the power whereby he so *governs*, as that he may also *save;* making these two things—the salving the rights of the Godhead, injured by sin, and the delivering of the sinner from an eternal ruin—to agree and consist with one another.

What an endearing obligation is this to obey—"that he will be the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him!" inasmuch as, while our obedience cannot merit the least thing from *him*, yet his vouchsafing to govern us doth most highly merit from *us*. For he governs "by writing his law in the heart," which makes our heart agree with the law, and by implanting Divine love in us, which vanquishes enmity and disaffection and virtually contains in itself our obedience, or "keeping his commandments."[2] Therefore this government of his over us is naturally necessary to our salvation and blessedness, and is the inchoation and beginning of it, as our perfected love to God and conformity to his nature and will, do involve and contain in themselves our complete and perfect blessedness; with which a continued enmity or a rebellious, mutinous disposition against God is naturally inconsistent; and would be to us and in us a perpetual, everlasting hell.

There can therefore be no enthralling servitude in such obedience, but the truest liberty; that by which the Son makes us free indeed.[3] Yea, a true sort of *royalty:* for hereby we come in the most allowable sense, to live as we will, our will being conformed to the will of God. Whereupon that was no high extravagant rant, but a sober expression, 'We are born in a kingdom; to serve God is to reign.'[4]

And we know this to be the will of God, "that all should

[1] Isa. ix. 6. [2] John xiv. 15, 23; 1 John v. 3. [3] John viii. 36. [4] Seneca.

honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."[1] Herewith will the evangelically obedient comport with high complacency, accounting him most highly worthy that it should be so. Wherein therefore the Christian law seems strictest and most rigorous, in the enjoined observance of our Lord Christ, herein we shall discern an unexceptionable reasonableness and comply with a complacential approbation. And let us put our own hearts to it, and see that without regret or obmurmuration they can readily consent to the equity of the precept.

It is enjoined us (constructively at least) that because "Christ died for us, when we were dead,"—quite lost in death, —"we that live" hereupon should settle this with ourselves as a fixed judgment, and upon that intervening judgment yield to the "constraint" of his love, so as "henceforth no more to live to ourselves;" as much as to say, God forbid we should henceforth be so profane; we must now for ever have done with that impious, unlawful way of living! What! after this, that we have so fully understood the state of our case? that we should be so assuming, as ever again to offer at such a thing, as living to ourselves, to make ourselves deities to ourselves: or to live otherwise "than unto him who died for us and rose again?"[2] This is high and great, and may seem strict and severe. What! to have the whole stream of all the actions and aims, the strength and vigour of our lives, to be carried in one entire undivided current unto him, and—as it must be understood, Gal. ii. 19—to God in him, so as never more to live to ourselves, a divided, separate life apart from him, or wherein we shall not finally and more principally design for him! How high is his claim—but how equal and grateful to a right mind! With what a plenitude of consent is every Divine command—taking this into the account—"esteemed to be right in all things;" so as that whatsoever is opposite is "hated as a false way."[3] And as the precept carries its own visible reason, the "keeping of it" carries its own "reward" in itself.[4] And is it too much for him who bears these keys and obtained

[1] John v. 23. [2] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. [3] Ps. cxix. 128. [4] Ps. xix. 11.

them on such terms and for such ends, *that we are* to be thus affected towards him?

We are required without exception, without limitation or reserve, "whatsoever we do," whether in word or work, "to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."[1]

Inquire we,—Do our hearts repine at this law? Do not we, doth not this world, owe so much to him? Why are we allowed a place and a time here? Why is not this world a flaming theatre? Is it not fit every one should know under whose government they live? by whose beneficence, under whose protection, and in whose name they may act so or so, and by whose authority,—either obliging or not restraining them, requiring or licensing them to do this or that? Doth this world owe less to Him that bears these keys, than Egypt did to Joseph, when thus the royal word went forth in reference to him:—"I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt?" How pleasant should it be to our souls, often to remember and think on that "name" of his which we bear,[2] and draw in as vital breath, the "sweet odours" of it.[3] How glorious a thing should we count it, because he is the Lord our God, to walk in his name for ever and ever, as all people will walk every one in the name of their god![4] And then we shall account it no *hard* law, "whatsoever we do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him," and *for* him; blessing God every day that we are put by him under the mild and merciful government of a Redeemer. Then we shall rejoicingly avow, as the apostle doth, "that we are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."[5]

Whereupon, when you find your special relation is thus settled and fixed unto the great Lord both of this present visible world and of hades or the invisible world also, by your solemn covenant with him, and evidenced by the con-

[1] Col. iii. 17. [2] Isa. xxvi. 8; Mal. iii. 18.
[3] Cant. i. 3; Ps. xlv. 6—11; John xx. 28. [4] Mic. iv. 5. [5] 1 Cor. ix. 21.

tinued correspondency of your heart and life, your dispositions and actions thereunto ;—

7. Do not *regret or dread* to pass out of the one world into the other at his call and under his conduct, though through the dark passage of death, remembering the keys are in so great and so kind a hand, and that his good pleasure herein is no more to be distrusted than to be disputed or withstood. Let it be enough to you, that what you cannot see yourself, he sees for you. You have oft desired your ways, your motions, your removals from place to place, might be directed by him in the world. Have you never said, "If thou go not with me, carry me not hence?" How safely and fearlessly may you follow him blindfold or in the dark any whither; not only from place to place, in this world, but from world to world! How lightsome soever the one, and gloomy and dark the other may seem to you, "darkness and light are to him alike." To him hades is *no* hades, nor is the dark way that leads into it to him an untrodden path. Shrink not at the thoughts of this translation, though it be not by escaping death, but even through the jaws of it.

We commonly excuse our aversion to die, by alleging that nature regrets it. But we do not enough consider that, in such a compounded sort of creature as we are, the word *nature* must be ambiguous. There is in us a sensitive nature that regrets it; but taking the case as it is now stated, can we think it tolerable that it should be regretted by the reasonable nature; unto which, if we appeal, can we suppose it so untrue to itself, as not to assert its own superiority? or to judge it fit that an intelligent, immortal spirit, capable of so great things in another world, should be content with a long abode here, only to keep a well-figured piece of flesh from putrifying, or give it the satisfaction of tasting meats and drinks that are grateful to it, for a few years? And if for a few, why not for many? and when those many were expired, why not for as many more? And the same reason always remaining, why not for always? The case is thus put, because the common meaning of this allegation, that nature

regrets or abhors this dissolution, is, not that they are concerned for their souls how it may fare with them in another world,—which the most little mind or trouble themselves about,—but that they are to have what is grateful to them in this world. And was this the end a *reasonable* spirit was made for, when, without reason, sense were alike capable of the same sort of gratifications? What law, what equity, what rule of decency can oblige the soul of a man capable of the society and enjoyments of angels, to this piece of self-denial for the sake of his incomparably baser body? Or can make it fit that the nobler and more excellent nature should be eternally subservient to the meaner and more ignoble? Especially considering that if (according to the case supposed) the two last foregoing directions be complied with, there is a sort of Divine nature superadded to the whole human nature, that cannot but prompt the soul ennobled by it, to aspire to suitable, even to the highest, operations and enjoyments whereof it is capable, and which are not attainable in this present bodily state.

And if there were still a dispute between *nature* and *nature*, it is enough that the great Lord of hades, and of this present sensible world too, will determine it. In a far lower instance, when the general of an army commands it upon an enterprise wherein life is to be hazarded, it would be an ill excuse of a cowardly declining, to say, their nature regrets and dreads the adventure. The thing is necessary. Against what is so unavoidable as death, that is an abject mind that reluctates.[1]

Come, then, let us embolden ourselves, and when he brings the key, dare to die. It is to obey and enjoy him who is our life and our all. Say we cheerfully each of us, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; into thy hands I commit it who hast redeemed it."

8. Let us *quietly submit* to Divine disposal, when our dear friends and relatives are by death taken away from us. For consider into what hands this affair is put,—of ordering every one's decease, and removal out of this into the other world,

[1] Miser est quicunque non vult, mundo secum moriente, mori.—*Sen. Tr.*

and who hath these keys. It is such a one, whose right, if we use our thoughts, we will not allow ourselves to dispute, or to censure his administration. His *original* right is that of a Creator and a God: "for all things were created for him, and by him,"[1] "and without him was nothing made that was made;"[2] "the first and the last" to all things.[3]

His *supervening* right was that of a Redeemer, as hath been already noted from this context, and as such he had it by acquisition, dying to obtain it, and overcoming death. "I am he that liveth and was dead." And then, as he elsewhere declares, by *constitution*, "All power is *given* me both in heaven and on earth."[4] The word ἐξουσία imports rightful power. And who are we, or any relatives of ours, whom all the power of heaven and earth hath no right to touch? What exempt jurisdiction can we pretend ourselves to belong unto?

Or will we adventure to say, not denying his right, he did not use it well in this case? Who is more fitly qualified to judge, than he that hath these keys? And let this matter be yet more thoroughly discussed. What is it that we find fault with in the removal of this or that person that was near and delightful to us? Is it that he was to die at all? or that he died so soon? If we say the former; do we blame the *constitution*, appointing all men once to die, by which this world is made a portal to another for all men, and whence it was necessary none should stay long in this, but only pass through into that world wherein every one is to have his everlasting abode? Or is it that, when we think it not unfit this should be the general and common course, there should yet have been a particular dispensation for this friend or relation of mine?

Let the former be supposed the thing we quarrel at, and consider the intolerable consequences of the matter's being otherwise, as the case is with this apostate, sinful world: such as upon second, better-weighed thoughts, we would abhor to admit into our minds, even as the matter of a wish. What! would we wish to mankind a sinning immortality on this

[1] Col. i. 16. [2] John i. 2. [3] Rev. i. 17. [4] Matt. xxviii. 19.

earth, before which a wise heathen professed to 'prefer one day virtuously spent?'[1] Would we wish this world to be the everlasting stage of indignities and affronts to him that made it? Would we wish there should never be a judgment-day? and that all the wise and righteous counsels of Heaven should be reversed and overturned, only to comport with our terrene and sensual inclinations? Is this our dutifulness and loyal affection to our blessed Lord, the Author of our beings and the God of our lives, whose rights and honours should be infinitely dearer to us than ourselves? Is it our kindness to ourselves and all others of our kind and order, that are all naturally capable, and many, by gracious vouchsafement, fitly qualified, to enjoy a perfect felicity in another world, that we would have all together confined for ever to this region of darkness, impurity, and misery?

Or if it displease us that our relatives are not, by some special dispensation, excepted from the common law of mortality, we would, surely, as much have expected an exemption ourselves; otherwise our dying away from *them* would make the so much regretted separation, as well as theirs from *us*. And what, then, if we were required to draw up our petition? to put it into express words? to turn our wish for ourselves and all our relatives and peculiar friends, into a formed, solemn prayer, to this effect, 'that we are content the law stand in force, that all the world should die, with only the exception of some few names, namely, our own, and of our kindred, and more inward friends?' What ashamed, confounded creatures should we be upon the view of our own request! Would we not presently be for quelling and suppressing it, and easily yield to be nonsuited without more ado? What pretence can we have not to think others as apt to make the same request for them and theirs? 'And if all the rest of the world shall die, would we and our friends dwell here alone? or would we have this world be continued habitable only on this private account, to gratify a family? And if we and our friends be holy, heavenly-minded persons,

[1] Cicero.

how kind were it to wish to ourselves and them, when fit for the society of angels and blessed spirits above, a perpetual abode in this low earthly state! Would we not now, upon riper, second thoughts, rather be content that things should rest as they are, and he that hath these keys use them his own way?

But if by all this we are put quite out of conceit with the desire of a terrestrial immortality, all that the matter finally results into is, that we think such a relative of ours died too soon. We would not have coveted for him an eternity on earth, but only more time. And how much more? or for what? If we were to set the time, it is like that when it comes, we should be as averse to a separation, if coexistent, then as now; and so we revolve into the exploded desire of a terrestrial immortality back again at last. If we were to assign the reason of our desire, that would seem, as in the present case, a plausible one to some, which is mentioned by Plutarch in his consolation to Apollonius for the loss of his son, concerning another such case—as he instances in many —of one Elysius an Italian; whose loss of his son Euthynous was much aggravated by this, that 'he was a great heir.' But what was said to that, there, and what is further to be said to anything of that kind, I shall reserve to a more proper place.

It is a more weighty allegation and of more common concernment, when a *useful* person is gone, and one very capable of becoming very eminently so. And this requires deeper consideration, and sundry things ought to be considered in order to the quieting *their* minds who are apt to behold such darker dispensations in the course of Providence, with amusement, and disturbance of spirit; that is, when they see persons of excellent endowments and external advantages, beyond the most, cut off in their prime; while the world is cumbered with drones never likely to do good, and pestered with such as are like to prove plagues to it and do great hurt and mischief to the age wherein they live: an ancient and not uncommon scruple to pious observers heretofore. "Where-

fore," says holy Job, "do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight,"[1] when his seed was cut off before his eyes. And here let us consider:—

(1.) That this world is in apostasy from God: and though he is pleased to use apt means for its recovery, he doth what he thinks fit herein, of mere grace and favour, and is under no obligation to do all that he can. His dispensation herein must correspond to, and bear upon it the impress of, other Divine perfections, his wisdom, holiness, justice, as well as grace. And for grace itself;—whereas all since the apostasy lie together in a fearful gulf of impurity and misery, and some, made more early sensible hereof than the most, do stretch out a craving hand and cry for help; if now a merciful hand, reached down from heaven, take hold of them and pluck them sooner out, is this disagreeable to the God of all grace, to make some such instances, and vouchsafe them an earlier deliverance, though they might, being longer delayed, be some way helpful to others, that continue stupid and insensible?

(2.) When he hath done much, in an age still obstinately unreclaimable, he may be supposed to let one appear only, with a promising aspect, and in just displeasure presently withdraw him, that they may understand they have forfeited such a blessing to this or that country, as such a one might have proved.

(3.) This may awaken some, the more to prize and improve the encouragements they may have from such as remain, or shall spring up in *their* stead who are gone, and to bless God that the weight of his interest and of the cause of religion doth not hang and depend upon the slender thread of this man's life. "The God of the spirits of all flesh" can raise up instruments as he pleases; and will, to serve his own purposes, though not ours.

(4.) He will have it known that though he *uses* instruments, he *needs* them not. It is a piece of Divine royalty and mag-

[1] Job xxi. 7, 8.

nificence, that when he hath prepared and polished such a utensil, so as to be capable of great service, he can lay it by without loss.

(5.) They that are most qualified to be of greatest use in this world, are thereby also the more capable of blessedness in the other. It is owing to his most munificent bounty that he may vouchsafe to reward sincere intentions as highly as great services. He took David's "having it in his heart" to build him a house, as kindly as Solomon's building him one; and as much magnifies himself in testifying his acceptance of such as he discharges from his service here, at the "third hour," as of them whom he engages not in it till the "eleventh."

(6.) Of their early piety he makes great present use in this world, testifying his acceptance of their works generally in his word, and *particularly* by the reputation he procures to them in the minds and consciences of such as were best able to judge, and even of all that knew them; which may be truly accounted a Divine testimony, both in respect of the *object*, which hath on it a Divine impress and speaks the self-recommending power of true goodness, which is the image of God; and in respect of the *subject*, shows the dominion God hath over minds, engaging not only good men to behold with complacency such pleasant, blooming goodness, correspondent to their own; but even bad men to approve in these others, what they entertain not in themselves. The same things are accepted with God, and approved of men.[1] "Thus being dead, they," as Abel, "yet speak."[2]

(7.) And it is a brighter and more unsullied testimony, which is left in the minds of men concerning such very hopeful persons as *die in their youth*. They never were otherwise known or can be remembered than as excellent young persons. This is the only idea which remains of them. Had they lived longer to the usual age of man, the remembrance of what they were in youth would have been in a great degree effaced and worn out by latter things; per-

[1] Rom. xiv. 18. [2] Heb. xi. 4.

haps blackened, not by what were less commendable, but more ungrateful to the greater part, especially if they lived to come into public stations. Their just zeal and contestations against the wickedness of the age, might disoblige many, and create them enemies who would make it their business to blast them, and cast upon their name and memory all the reproach they could invent: whereas the lustre of that virtue and piety which had provoked nobody, appears only with an amiable look, and leaves behind nothing of such a person, but a fair, unblemished, alluring, and instructive example; which they that observed them, might with less prejudiced minds compare with the useless, vicious lives of many that they see to have filled up a room in the world unto extreme old age, either to no purpose, or to very bad. And how vast is the difference in respect of usefulness to the world, between a pious, young gentleman dying in his youth, that lived long in a little time, untainted by youthful lusts and vanities, and victorious over them; and an "accursed sinner of a hundred years old;"[1] one that was an infant of days, and though a hundred years old, yet still a child; that had not filled up his days with anything of real value or profit to himself or others,—as some very judicious expositors understand that text; that (as he[2] aptly speaks) had nothing besides grey hairs and wrinkles, to make him be thought a long liver; but who might truly be said not to have 'lived long,' but only to have 'been long' in the world. How sweet and fragrant a memory doth the one, how rotten and stinking a name doth the other, leave behind him to survivors!

Therefore such very valuable young persons as are taken hence in the flower of their age are not to be thought, upon that account of usefulness to this world, to have lived in it that shorter time in vain.

They leave behind them that testimony which will turn to

[1] Isa. lxv. 20.

[2] Non est quòd quenquam propter canos aut rugas, putes diu vixisse. Non ille diu vixit, sed diu fuit.—*Sen.*

account; both for the glory of God's grace, which he hath exemplified in them and which may be improved to the good of many who shall have seen that a holy life, amidst the temptations that the youthful age is exposed to, is no impracticable thing; and that an early death is as possible also to *themselves*.

But besides their no little usefulness in this world, which they leave, we must know—

(8.) That the affairs and concernments of the *other* world, whither they go, are incomparably greater every way, and much more considerable. And to this most unquestionable maxim must be our last and final resort, in the present case. All the perturbation and discomposure of mind, which we suffer upon any such occasion, arises chiefly from our having too high and great thoughts of this world, and too low and diminishing thoughts of the other; and the evil must be remedied by rectifying our apprehensions in this matter. Because that other world is hades, unseen and not within the verge of our sense, our sensual minds are prone to make of it a very little thing, and even next to nothing, as too many will have it to be quite nothing at all. We are concerned, in duty to our blessed Redeemer and Lord and for his just honour, to magnify this his prefecture, and render it as great to ourselves as the matter requires and as our very narrow minds can admit; and should labour to correct it as a great and too common fault, a very gross vulgar error, to conceive of persons leaving this world of ours, as if they hereby became useless; and, upon the matter, lost out of the creation of God. So is our fancy prepossessed and filled with delusive images that throng in upon it through our unwary senses, that we imagine this little spot of our earth to be the only place of business, and all the rest of the creation to be mere vacuity, vast, empty space, where there is nothing to do and nothing to be enjoyed. Not that these are formed, positive thoughts or a settled judgment with *good* men, but they are floating imaginations, so continually obtruded upon them, from—what lies next—the objects of sense, that they

have more influence to affect the heart and infer suitable, sudden, and indeliberate emotions of spirit than the most formed judgment, grounded on things that lie without the sphere of sense, can outweigh.

And hence when a good man dies, elder or younger, the common cry is among the better sort—for the other do less concern themselves—'Oh what a loss is this! Not to be repaired! not to be borne!' Indeed, this is better than the common stupidity,—not to consider, not "to take it to heart, when the righteous man perisheth, or is taken away." And the law of our own nature obliges and prompts us, to feel and regret the losses which afflict us. But such resentments ought to be followed and qualified by greater thoughts, arising from a superior nature, that ought presently to take place with us, of the nobler employments which God calls such unto, "of whom this world was not worthy;"[1] and how highly his great and all-comprehending interest is to be preferred before our own, or the interest of this or that family, country, or nation on earth!

And, at once, both to enlarge and quiet our minds on such occasions, we should particularly consider,—

i. The *vast amplitude* of the heavenly hades in comparison of our minute spot of earth or of that dark region—whereso-ever it is—reserved for the just punishment of delinquents, according to such intimations as the Holy Scriptures give us hereof; which being writ only for the use of us on earth, cannot be supposed to intend the giving us more distinct accounts of the state of things in the upper world than were necessary for us in this our present state.

But it is no obscure hint that is given of the spaciousness of the heavenly regions, when, purposely to represent the Divine immensity, it is said of the unconfined presence of the great God, that even "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him."[2] How vast scope is given to our thinking minds to conceive heavens above heavens, encircling one another, till we have quite tired our faculty, and yet we

[1] Heb. xi. 38. [2] 1 Kings viii. 27; 2 Chron. vi. 18.

know not how far short we are of the utmost verge! And when our Lord is said to have ascended "*far* above all heavens,"[1] whose arithmetic will suffice to tell how many they are? whose uranography to describe *how far* that is?

We need not impose it upon ourselves to judge their rules infallible, who, being of no mean understanding nor indiligent in their inquiries, have thought it not improbable that there may be fixed stars within view, at that distance from our earth, that a movable, in as swift motion as that of a bullet shot from a cannon, would be fifty thousand years in passing from the one to the other.[2] But how much remoter that star may be from the utmost verge of the universe, is left altogether unimaginable. I have been told that a very ingenious artist going about, in exact proportions, to describe the orb or vortex to which our sun belongs, on as large a table as could be convenient for him to work upon, was at a loss to find a spot not too big, in proportion, for our earth, and big enough whereupon to place the point, made very fine, of one foot of his compass.

If any suspect extravagancy in our modern computations, let him take a view of what is discoursed to this purpose by a writer of most unexceptionable wisdom and sobriety,—as well as most eminent sanctity,—in his time.[3]

[1] Ephes. iv. 10.

[2] Computation by the Hon. Francis Roberts, Esq. Philosophical Transactions for the months March and April, 1694.

[3] Bolton, in his *Four Last Things*, who, speaking of heaven, directs us to guess the immeasurable magnitude of it, as otherwise, so by the incredible distance from the earth to the starry firmament; and adds, 'If I should here tell you the several computations of astronomers, in this kind, the sums would seem to exceed all possibility of belief.' And he annexes in his margin sundry computations, which I shall not here recite; you may find them in the author himself, p. 21. And yet besides, as he further adds, the late learnedest of them place above the eighth sphere, wherein all those glorious lamps shine so bright, three moving orbs more. Now the empyrean heaven comprehends all these; how incomprehensible, then, must its compass and greatness necessarily be! But he supposes it possible, the adventure of mathematicians may be too audacious and peremptory, etc.; and concludes the height and extent of the heavens to be beyond all human investigation.

Now when the Lord of this vast universe beheld upon this little spot intelligent creatures in transgression and misery, —that he did so compassionately concern himself for the recovery of such as should, by apt methods, be induced to comply with his merciful design, and appoint his own eternal Son to be their Redeemer; in order whereto, as he was "God with God," he must also become man among men, one of themselves, and so as "God-man," for his kindness to some, be constituted universal Lord of all;—shall mere pity towards this world greaten it above the other?

But we are not left without ground to apprehend a more *immediate* reason for his being, as Redeemer, made Head and Lord of all those creatures that were the original inhabitants of the invisible world. For when it had been said, "that all things were created by him,"[1] not only the visible things on earth, but the invisible things in heaven, here is a regression to these latter, who were before—for their greater dignity—generally first mentioned, and now some enumeration given of them, "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers;" and "all things,"—again repeated that these might appear expressly included,—* are * said over again "to be created by him, and for him," which was sufficient to express his creative right in them. It is presently subjoined, and "he is before all things, and by him all things consist."[2] All owe their stability to him, namely, the mentioned thrones, dominions, etc., as well as other things. But how? or upon what terms? That we might understand his redemptory right was not here to be overlooked, it is shortly after added, "and having made peace by the blood of his cross, it pleased the Father" (to be repeated out of what went before) "by him to reconcile all things to himself;" and this "by him" iterated, as much as to say, by him shedding his blood on the cross, "whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven," lest the thrones, dominions, mentioned before, should be forgot. And a word is used accommodable enough to the several purposes before

[1] Col. i. 16. [2] Ver. 17.

expressed,—ἀποκαταλλάξαι,—which doth not always suppose enmity, but more generally signify, upon a sort of commutation or valuable consideration, to procure or conciliate, or make a thing more firmly one's own or assure it to himself, though it is afterwards used in the stricter sense.[1]

I have often considered with wonder and pleasure, that whereas God is called by that higher and far more extensive name, "the Father of spirits;" he is also pleased so graciously to vouchsafe as to be styled "the God of the spirits of all flesh," and thereby to signify that having an order of spirits so meanly lodged that inhabit frail and mortal flesh, though he have a world of spirits to converse with, "whose dwelling is not with flesh;" yet he disdains not a relation to so mean and abject spirits—"his offspring also"—in our world. And that, because this was the place of offending delinquents that he would recover, the Redeemer should sort himself with them, and, as they were "partakers of flesh and blood, himself likewise take part of the same"—this was great and Godlike; and speaks the largeness and amplitude of an all-comprehending mind, common to Father and Son, and capable of so applying itself to the greatest things, as not to neglect the least: and therefore so much the more magnifies God and our Redeemer, by how much the less considerable we and our world are. But that hence we should so over-magnify this world, as if nothing were considerable that lies without its compass, is most perversely to misconstrue the most amazing condescension.

The Spirit of God, by holy David, teaches us to reason the quite contrary way; and from the consideration he had of the vastness and splendour of the upper world, "of the heavens, the moon and stars," etc. not to magnify, but diminish our world of mankind, and say, "What is man?"

And let us further consider,—

ii. The inexpressible numerousness of the other world's inhabitants, with the excellencies wherein they shine and the orders they are ranked into; and how unlikely is it that holy

[1] Col. i. 21.

souls, that go thither, should want employment. Great concourse and multitudes of people make places of business in *this* world, and must much more do so where creatures of the most spiritual and active natures must be supposed to have their residence. Scripture speaks of *myriads* (which we read "an innumerable company") of "angels," besides "all the spirits of just men;"[1] who are sometimes said to be more than any one[2]—which we causelessly render man—could number.[3] And when we are told of many "heavens, above all which our Lord Jesus is said to have ascended;" are all those heavens only empty solitudes? uninhabited glorious deserts? When we find how full of vitality this base earth of ours is, how replenished with living creatures, not only on the surface, but within it; how unreasonable is it to suppose the nobler parts of the universe to be less peopled with inhabitants, of proportionable spirituality, activity, liveliness and vigour to the several regions, which, the remoter they are from dull earth, must be supposed still the finer, and apt to afford fit and suitable habitations to such creatures? Whether we suppose pure, unclothed spirits to be the natives in all those heavens, all comprehended under the one name of "angels," or whether—as some think of all created spirits—that they have all vital union with some or other vehicles, ethereal or celestial, more or less fine and pure as the region is to which they belong, having gradually associated unto them the spirits of holy men gone from us, which are said to be ἰσάγγελοι, angels' fellows,[4] it is indifferent to our purpose.

Let us only consider them all, as intelligent, spiritual beings, full of holy light, life, active power, and love to their common Lord and one another. And can we imagine their state to be a state of torpid silence, idleness, and inactivity, or that they have not much higher and nobler work to do there than they can have in such a world as this, or in such bodies as here they lug to and fro?

And the Scriptures are not altogether silent concerning the distinct orders of those glorious creatures, that inhabit all

[1] Heb. xii. [2] οὐδεὶς. [3] Rev. vii. [4] Luke xx. 36.

the heavens, which this upper hades must be understood to contain; though it hath not provided to gratify any one's curiosity, so far as to give us particular accounts of their differences and distinctions. And though we are not warranted to believe such conjectures concerning them as we find in the supposititious Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy*, or much less the idler dreams of Valentinus and the Gnostics about their Æons, with divers more such fictions, yet we are not to neglect what God hath expressly told us, namely, that giving us some account of the creation in the hades, or the invisible part of it, there are "thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, angels," and elsewhere "archangels," "authorities,"[1] which, being terms that import order and government, can scarce allow us not to conceive, that of all those numberless multitudes of glorious creatures that replenish and people those spacious regions of light and bliss, there are none who belong not to some or other of those principalities and dominions.

Whence therefore nothing is more obvious than to conceive, that whosoever is adjoined to them, ascending out of our world, presently hath his station assigned him, is made to know his post, and how he is to be employed in the service and adoration of the Sovereign Lord of all, and in paying the most regular homage to "the throne of God and the Lamb;" it being still to be remembered, that God is not worshipped there or here, as an ἐνδεής, or as though he needed anything, since he "gives to all breath and being and all things;"[2] but that the felicity of his most excellent creatures doth in great part consist in acting perpetually according to the dictate of a just and right mind. And that therefore they take highest pleasure in prostration, in casting down their crowns, in shrinking even into nothing, before the original, eternal, subsistent Being, that he may be owned as the "All in all;" because they follow herein, a most satisfied judgment, and express it when they say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for

[1] Col. i. 16, with 1 Pet. iii. 22. [2] Acts xvii. 25.

thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."[1] And "worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength,"[2] etc.

And they that "rest not night or day" from such high and glorious employments, have they nothing to do? Or will we say or think, because we see not how the heavenly potentates lead on their bright legions, to present themselves before the throne, to tender their obeisance, or receive commands and dispatches to this or that far remote dynasty; or, suppose, to such and such a mighty star—whereof there are so numberless myriads, and why should we suppose them not replenished with glorious inhabitants?—whither they fly as quick as thought, with joyful speed, under the All-seeing Eye, glad to execute wise and just commands upon all occasions: but alas! in all this we can but "darken counsel with words without knowledge." We cannot pretend to knowledge in these things; yet if from Scripture intimations and the concurrent reason of things, we only make suppositions of what may be, not conclusions of what is; let our thoughts ascend as much higher as they can, I see not why they should fall lower than all this.

And because we cannot be positive, will we therefore say or think, there can be no such thing, or nothing but dull inactivity, in those regions? Because that other world is hades, and we see nothing, shall we make little, or next to nothing, of it? We should think it very absurd reasoning if we should use it, in reference to such mean trifles in comparison, and say there is no such thing as pomp and state, no such thing as action or business, in the court of Spain or France, of Persia or Japan, because no sound from thence strikes our ear, or the beams of majesty there dazzle not our eye.

I should indeed think it very unreasonable to make mere magnitude or vast extent of space, filled up with nothing but void air, ether, or other fine matter (call it by what name you will) alone, or by itself, a very considerable note of excellency of the other invisible world above this visible world

[1] Rev. iv. 11. [2] Rev. v. 12.

of ours. But I reckon it much more unreasonable and unenforced (to say no more) by any principles either of philosophy or religion, finding this world of ours—a baser part of the creation—so full of life and of living inhabitants, of one degree or another, to suppose the nobler parts of the universe, still ascending upwards, generally unpeopled and desert; when it is so conceivable in itself, and so aptly tending to magnify our Creator and Redeemer, that all the upper regions be fully inhabited with intelligent creatures; whether mere spirits unclothed with anything material, or united with some or other matter, we need not determine.

And whereas Scripture plainly intimates that the apostate revolted spirits that fell from God, and kept not their first stations, were vastly numerous; we have hence scope enough for our thoughts to conceive, that so spacious regions being replenished with intelligent creatures, always innocent and happy, the delinquents compared with them may be as despicable for their paucity as they are detestable for their apostasy; and that the *horrid* hades, wherein they are reserved to the "blackness of darkness for ever," may be no more in proportion, nay, unexpressibly less, than some little rocky island, appointed as a place of punishment for criminals, in comparison of a flourishing, vast empire, fully peopled with industrious, rich, sober-minded and happy inhabitants.

We might further consider,—

iii. The high perfection they presently attain to, who are removed, though in their younger years, out of this into that other world.

The "spirits of just men" are there said to be "made perfect." Waiving the Olympic metaphor, which is, at most, but the thing signifying, that which is signified cannot be less than the concurrence of natural and moral perfection; the perfecting of all our faculties, mind, will, and active power, and of all holy and gracious excellencies, knowledge, wisdom, love, holiness. The apostle makes the difference be, as that of a child and that of a man.[1] And would any one

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

that hath a child he delights in, wish him to be a child always and only capable of "childish things?" Or is it a reasonable imagination, that by how much we are more capable of action, we shall be the more useless, and have the less to do?

We may further lastly add, that which is not the least considerable;

iv. That all the active service and usefulness we are capable of in *this world*, is but transitory, and lies within the compass of this temporary state of things, which must have an end: whereas the business of the *other world* belongs to our final and eternal state, which shall never be at an end. The most extraordinary qualifications for service on earth, must hereafter, if not by the cessation of the active powers and principles themselves, as tongues, prophecies, and such knowledge as is uncommon, and by peculiar vouchsafement afforded but to a few for the help of many;—these endowments designed for the propagation of the Christian faith and for the stopping mouths of gainsayers, must, in the use and exercise at least, by the cessation of the objects and occasions, fail, and cease, and "vanish away."[1] The like may be said of courage and fortitude to contend against prevailing wickedness; skill, ability, with external advantages, to promote the impugned interest of Christ and Christian religion; of all these there will be no further use in that other world. They are all to be considered as means to the end. But how absurd were it to reckon the means of greater importance than the end itself! The whole present constitution of Christ's kingdom on earth, is but preparatory and introductive to the celestial kingdom. And how absurd were it to prefer this temporary kingdom to the eternal one, and present serviceableness to this, to perpetual service in the other!

It is true that service to God and our Redeemer in this present state, is necessary in its own kind, highly acceptable to God, and justly much valued by good men; and we ought

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

ourselves willingly to submit to serve God in a meaner capacity in this world, while it is his pleasure we shall do so, especially if God should have given any signification of his mind concerning "our abode in the flesh" some longer time, as it is likely he had done to the apostle Paul,[1] because he says, "he was confident, and did know" that so it should be:[2] we should be abundantly satisfied with it, as he was. But to suppose an abode here to be simply and universally more eligible, is very groundless and unreasonable; and were a like case, as if a person of very extraordinary abilities and accomplishments, because he was useful in some obscure country village, is to be looked upon as lost, because his prince, being informed of his great worth, calls him up to his court, and, finding him every way fit, employs him in the greatest affairs of state!

To sum up this matter: whereas the means are always, according to usual estimate, wont to derive their value from their end; time, from eternity; this judgment of the case, that usefulness in this present state is of greater consequence and more important than the affairs of the other world, breaks all measures, overturns the whole frame and inverts the order of things, makes the means more valuable than the end, time more considerable than eternity, and the concernments of a state that will soon be over, greater than those of our fixed, permanent, everlasting state, that will never be over.

If we would allow ourselves the liberty of reasoning, according to the measure and compass of our narrow minds, biassed and contracted by private interest and inclination, we should have the like plausible things to think concerning such of ours as die in infancy, and that when they have but newly looked into this world are presently again caught out of it; that if they had lived, what might they have come to? How pleasant and diverting might their childhood have been! How hopeful their youth! How useful their riper age! But these are commonly thoughts little wiser than theirs,

[1] Phil. i. 24. [2] Ver. 25.

and proceed from a general infidelity or misbelief, that whatsoever is not within the compass of this little, sorry world, is all emptiness and nullity! Or if such be pious and more considering, it is too plain they do not, however, consider enough, how great a part it is of Divine magnificence, to take a reasonable immortal spirit from animating a piece of well-figured clay, and presently adjoin it to the general assembly above! How glorious a change is made upon their child in a moment! How much greater a thing it is to be adoring God above in the society of angels, than to be dandled on their knee, or enjoy the best provisions they can make for them on earth! that they have a part to act upon an eternal stage, and though they are but lately come into being, are never to go out of being more, but to be everlasting monuments and instruments of the glory of their great Creator and Lord!

Nor, perhaps, is it considered so deeply as it ought, that it hath seemed meet to the Supreme Wisdom upon a most important reason, in the case of lengthening or shortening the lives of men, not ordinarily, or otherwise than upon a great occasion, to interrupt the tendencies of natural causes, but let nature run its course: for otherwise, very frequent innovations upon nature would make miracles cheap and common, and consequently useless to their proper, great ends, which may be of greater significancy in the course of God's government over the world, than some addition to this or that life can be worth. And therefore should this consideration repress our wonderment, why God doth not, when he so easily can, by one touch upon this or that second cause, prevent or ease the grievous pains which *they* often suffer that love him, and whom he loves? He reckons it fitter, and they will in due time reckon so to themselves, when the wise methods of his government come to be unfolded and understood, that we should any of us bear what is ungrateful to us, in point of pain, loss of friends, or other unpleasing events of providence, than that he should make frequent and less necessary breaches upon the common order

and course of government which he hath established over a delinquent, sinful world.

Whereupon it is a great piece of wisdom and dutifulness towards our great Lord, not to pray absolutely, peremptorily, or otherwise than with great submission and deference to his wise and holy pleasure, for our own or our friends' lives, ease, outward prosperity, or any external or temporary good thing. For things that concern our spiritual and eternal welfare, his good and acceptable will is more expressly declared, and made known already and beforehand.

But as to the particular case of the usefulness of any friend or relative of ours in this or the other state, the matter must be finally left to the arbitrament and dispose of him who hath "the keys of hades, and of death." And when by his turn of them he hath decided the matter, we then know what his mind and judgment is, which it is no more fit for us to censure than possible to disannul. Whatever great purposes we might think one cut off in the flower of his age capable of serving in this world, we may be sure He judged him capable of serving greater in the other.

And now by this time I believe you will expect to have somewhat a more particular account of this excellent young gentleman, whose early decease hath occasioned my discoursing so largely on this subject: not more largely than the importance, but much less accurately than the dignity of it did challenge.

He was the eldest son of Sir Charles Hoghton, of Hoghton Tower, in the county of Lancaster, Baronet, and of the Lady Mary, daughter of the late Lord Viscount Massarene, his very pious consort: a family of eminent note in that northern part of the kingdom, for its antiquity, opulency, and interest in the country where it is seated; and which hath intermarried with some or other of the nobility, one generation after another; but hath been most of all considerable and illustrious, as having been itself, long, the immemorial known seat of religion, sobriety, and good order, from father to son; giving example, countenance,

and patronage to these praiseworthy things to the country round about: and wherein hitherto (through the singular favour and blessing of Heaven) there hath not been that visible degeneracy, that might be so plainly observed and sadly deplored in divers great families; as if it were an exemption from what was so anciently remarked by the poet, 'Ætas parentum, pejor avis,' etc. But, on the contrary, such as have succeeded, have, by a laudable ambition and emulation, as it were, striven to outshine such as have gone before them in piety and virtue.

In this bright and lucid tract and line, was this most hopeful young gentleman,—now arrived to the age wherein we use to write man,—beginning to stand up in view, and to draw the eyes and raise the hopes of observers and well-wishers, as not likely to come short of any of his worthy ancestors and predecessors. But Heaven had its eye upon him too, and both made and judged him meet for an earlier translation to a more eminent station *there*.

He was from his childhood observed to be above the common rate docile, of quick apprehension, solid judgment and retentive memory, and, betimes, a lover of books and learning.

For religion: his knowledge of the principles of it continually grew, as his capacity did more and more admit, under the eye and endeavours of his parents, and such other instructors as they took care he should never want. But his savour and relish thereof, and the impression made thereby upon his soul, was so deep and so early, as to be apparently owing to a higher cause, the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, and a singular blessing thereby upon his pious education. And in this way, it could not be easy to such as were his most diligent and constant observers, to conclude or conjecture when God first began to deal with his spirit.

Above ten years ago, I had opportunity for a few days to have some converse with him in his father's house. And as I could then perceive his spirit was much tinctured with religion, so I received information that for a considerable

time before, there constantly appeared in him such *specimina* of serious piety, as were very comfortable to his parents, and might be instructive to others that took notice of them.

In the course of divers following years, he greatly improved, under domestic and private instruction, both in grammar-learning and academical studies, for which he wanted not apt helps. When there was great reason to hope he was so well established in religion and virtue, as neither to be shocked by the importunate temptations of a sceptical vicious age in the general, or betrayed by the facility of his own youthful age, his prudent, worthy father judged it requisite and not unsafe, to adventure him into a place of more hazard, but greater advantage, for his accomplishment in that sort of culture and polishing that might, in due time, render him, both in reality and with better reputation, serviceable in a public station; that is, where he might gain such knowledge of the world, of men, and of the laws of his country, as were proper for his rank, and one that was to make such a figure in the nation as it was to be hoped he might; and upon that account, not yet a year ago, brought him up to London, entered him in the Temple, took for him convenient lodgings there, and left him settled unto mutual satisfaction.

He was little diverted by the noise, novelties, or the gaieties of the town, but soon betook himself to a course of close study; discontinued not his converse with God, and thereby learned and was enabled to converse with men warily and with caution; so as he might be continually improving and gaining good without doing or receiving hurt.

The substance of the following account I received from a pious, intelligent young man, who several years attended him before his coming to town, and afterwards to the finishing of his course.

'Mr. Hoghton's early seriousness increased with his years. His deportment was grave, composed, without any appearance of pride, which he carefully avoided. His diligence in study was unusual, and his proficiency very great; neither was this

less an effect of his conscientiousness in the improvement of his time, than of his desire after knowledge.

'As to his demeanour and performance of duties towards his several relations, his self-denial, his sedateness of mind, his fear of sin, his tenderness of conscience, love of the best things, and unconcernedness about things of an inferior nature, so far as hath fallen under my observation in near six years' time, I believe few, if any of his years, did exceed him.

'In his sickness he was very patient, submissively undergoing those heavy strokes it pleased God to lay upon him.

'Upon his apprehension of death, he seemed very little discouraged, but quietly resigned himself into the hands of the all-wise Disposer of all things.

'Some time before his sickness, and in the time of it, he said, afflictions were very proper for God's children, and those that were never afflicted, had reason to question the truth of their grace, and God's love to them, quoting that Scripture, "If ye are without chastening, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

'He often repeated these words, in the beginning of his illness:—

'"It is a hard thing to make 'our calling and our election sure.' . . . I desire to glorify God."

'When he understood, from some expressions of his physician, how dangerous his distemper was, he said he knew very well the meaning of his physician's words; but that, however it proved, he hoped he was safe.

'He was so strict in the observation of the Lord's-day, that if he happened to lie longer than ordinary in the morning, he would continue the later in duties in the evening; saying, we ought not to make that day shorter than other days.

'Though he was very intent on his studies, yet on Saturdays he always broke them off at noon, and spent the afternoon in reading divinity, and preparing himself for the Lord's-day.

'He was always constant in his secret duties, and suffered nothing to hinder him from the performing of them.

'Before he expired, he spoke with great assurance of his future happiness, and hopes of meeting his relations in glory.' Thus far goes that account.

His sickness was short. When, hearing of it, I went to visit him, I was met in an ante-chamber, by his ingenuous, dear brother, to whom it is no reproach to be second to him, and who, it is to be hoped, will be at least truly so, making him, though a fair example, yet not a standard; who hath for divers years been most intimately conjunct and conversant with him, known his way, his spirit, his manner of life, his purity; and may be led on and excited thereby, wherein he hath observed him to excel others, to endeavour not to come short, but, if it were possible, to excel him; remembering he is to be the next solace of his parents, hope of his family, and resort of his country (if God shall vouchsafe to continue him) in succeeding time.

From him, I had little expectation of finding his sick brother in a conversable condition; the malignity of his fever having before seized his head and very much disordered his intellectuals; but going in, I was much surprised to find it so far otherwise. He presently knew me; and his understanding, that served him for little else, failed him not in the concernments of religion and of his soul. There was not an improper or misplaced word (though the case could not admit of interchanging many) that came from him. Concerning the substance of the gospel of Christ, as it could be shortly summed up to him, he said he had no doubt; and his transactions with Christ himself,—accepting Him, resigning and entrusting himself absolutely and entirely to Him, and God in Him,—were so explicit, distinct, and clear, as could leave no place of doubt concerning him. He professed his concurrence to such requests as were put up to God concerning him; and the next morning slept quietly in the Lord.

Nor now will it be unfit, to shut up the discourse, with some few, suitable *reflections*, upon this double subject: the text and this providence, taken together.

1. How happy is it, when this power of our great Redeemer and Lord, mentioned in the text, and a preparation with cheerful willingness, dutifully to comport with it, concur and meet together, as they have done in this instance! Our Lord hath shown his power. He asserted it in the text; in this instance he used it, giving an open testimony that he takes it to belong to him, to make such translations from one world to another, whensoever he judges it a fit season; nor is solicitous, whether men acknowledge his right so to do or no; or what censures they will pass upon what he hath done. He doth his own work, and leaves men to their own talk, or mutterings, or wonder, or amusement at it, as they will. So it becomes sovereign power to do; established upon the most unquestionable foundations, exercised according to the wisest and most righteous measures. He hath used his own right, and satisfied himself in the use of it. He thought not himself concerned to advise with any of us about it; who, as his counsellor, should instruct him?[1] He owes so much to himself, to act as accountable to no one, nor liable to any one's control.

Here is most rightful, resistless power, justly and kindly used, on the one hand; and, on the other, how placid, how calm a resignation! Here was no striving; no crying; no reluctant motion; no querulous, repining voice: nothing but peaceful, filial submission; a willingness to obey the summons given.

This was a happy accord; the willingness of this departing soul proceeding, not from stupidity, but trust in him who kept these keys; and such preparedness for removal as the gospel required. O happy souls! that finding the key is turning, and opening the door for them, are willing to go forth upon such terms, as "knowing whom they have believed," etc.; and that neither "principalities or powers, life or death," etc., "can ever separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord." Life, they find, hath not separated—whereof was the greater danger; and death is so far from making this

[1] Isa. xl. 13; Rom. xi. 34.

separation, that it shall complete their union with the blessed God in Christ, and lay them enfolded in the everlasting embraces of Divine love! Happy they that can hereupon welcome death, and say, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!" that before only desired leave to die, and have now obtained it; that are, with certainty of the issue, at the point of becoming complete victors over the last enemy, and are ready to enter upon their triumph, and take up their ἐπινίκιον, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." Happy soul! here will be a speedy end of all thy griefs and sorrows; they will be presently swallowed up in an absolute plenitude and fulness of joy. There is already an end put to thy tormenting cares and fears; for what object can remain to thee of a rational fear, when once, upon grounds such as shake not under thee, thou art reconciled to death? This is the most glorious sort of victory; namely, by reconciliation. For so thou hast conquered, not the enemy only, but the enmity itself by which he was so. Death is become thy friend, and so no longer to be feared; nor is there anything else, from whence thou art to fear hurt; for death was "thy last enemy," even this bodily death! The whole region beyond it is, to one in thy case, clear and serene, when to others is reserved the "blackness of darkness for ever." There are no terrible ὑστερήματα, no formidable consequences, no reserves of misery, no treasures of wrath to be feared by thee. To one in thy condition, may that, without hesitation, be applied, *Nihil metuit, qui optat mori;*[1] 'He fears nothing, who desires to die.' What is the product of some men's infidelity, is the genuine product of *their* faith. From so contrary causes may proceed the same effect. The effect, a willingness to die or a bold adventure upon death, is the same, but only in respect of the general kind; with great differences in the special kind, according to the difference and contrariety of the causes whereof they

[1] Sen. Tr.

discernibly taste and savour. With infidels, it is a negative, dead, stupid, partial willingness, or but a non-aversion, and in a lower and much diminished degree; or if some present, intolerable, disgraceful calamity urge them, a rash, obstinate, presumptuous rushing upon death, because they do not consider consequences. With believers, such as in reference to the concernments of the other world do "walk by faith," while as yet they cannot walk "by sight,"[1] in reference to those things it is a positive, vital courage,—"We are confident,"[2]—and a preponderating inclination of will,—"We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord;" because, as is manifest, they do consider consequences, and how blessed a state will certainly ensue! How vast are these special differences of the same thing in the general,—willingness to die!

O the transports of joy that do now most rationally result from this state of the case, when there is nothing left, lying between the dislodging soul and the glorious unseen world, but only the dark passage of death; and that so little formidable, considering who hath the keys of the one and the other! How reasonable is it upon the account of somewhat common herein to the Redeemer and the redeemed, although everything be not, to take up the following words, that so plainly belong to this very case: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol, or hades;" thou wilt not forsake or abandon it in that wide world, "neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life;" the path that leads unto that presence of thine, where is "fulness of joy;" and to those "pleasures which are at thy right hand," or in thy power, and which are for "evermore;"[3] and shall never admit either of end or diminution.

Now what do we mean, to let our souls hang in doubt? Why do we not drive things for them, to an issue? put them into those same safe hands that hold these keys; absolutely

[1] 2 Cor. v. 7. [2] Ver. 8; *Θαῤῥοῦμεν*. [3] Ps. xvi. 9—11.

resign, devote, intrust, and subject them to him; get them "bound up in the bundle of life;" so adjoin and unite them to him—not doubting but as we give them up, he will and doth, in that instant, take hold of them, and receive them into union with himself—as that we may "assure our hearts," that because "he lives, we shall live also."[1] Thus the ground of our hope becomes sure, and of that joy which springs from such a hope.[2] Our "life," we may now say, "is hid with Christ in God,"[3] even though we are, in ourselves, dead or dying creatures. Yea, "Christ is our life, and when he, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory."[4] He hath assured us, that because "He is the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Him, though he were dead, shall yet live;" and that, "whosoever lives and believes in Him" hath thereby a life already begun in Him, in respect whereof he "shall never die."[5] What now can be surer than this? So far we are at a certainty upon the included supposition; that is, that we believe in him.

And what now remains to be ascertained? what? Only our own intervening death; we must, it is true, be "absent from these bodies," or we cannot, as we would, "be present with the Lord." And is that all? Can anything now be more certain than *that?* O happy state of our case! How should our hearts spring and leap for joy, that our affairs are brought into this posture; that in order to our perfect blessedness, nothing is farther wanting but to die, and that the certainty of death completes our assurance of it! What should now hinder our breaking forth into the most joyful thanksgivings, that it is so little doubtful we shall die? that we are in no danger of a terrestrial immortality, and that the only thing that it remained we should be assured of, is so *very sure?* that we are sure it is not in the power of all this world, to keep us always in it; that the most spiteful enemy we have in all the world, cannot do us that spite, to keep us from dying? How gloriously may good men triumph over

[1] John xiv. 19. [2] Rom. v. 2. [3] Col. iii. 3. [4] Ver. 4.
[5] John xi. 25, 26.

the impotent malice of their most mischievous enemies, namely, that the greatest mischief, even in their own account, that it can ever be *in their power* to do them, is to put it *out of* their own power ever to hurt them more;—for they now go quite out of their reach. They can, being permitted, "kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."[1] What a remarkable, significant "after that" is this! What a defiance doth it import of the utmost effort of human power and spite, that here it terminates! It is now come to its *ne plus ultra!*

And so we are to look upon all our other trials and afflictions, that in any providential way may befall us; we may be sick, in pain, in poverty, in disgrace, but we shall not be always in mortal flesh, which is the *substratum* and the root of all the rest. Can we be upon better terms, having but two things to be concerned about as necessary to our complete felicity,—union with Christ and disunion from these bodies? God is graciously ready to assist us in reference to the former, though therein he requires our care, subserviently hereto: in reference to the latter, he will take care himself in his own fit season, without any care or concern of ours in the matter; and only expects us to wait with patience, till that fit season come. And come it will, perhaps sooner than we may think. He doth not always go by our measures in judging of the fit season, as this present instance shows.

2. From the text, taken in conjunction with this act of providence, we may observe the great advantage of a pious education. Though the best means of such education do not always prove effectual, yet this being much the more probable course upon which to expect God's blessing, than the parents' profane negligence of the souls of their children; such an example, wherein God by his blessing testified his approbation of parental care and diligence, should greatly quicken the endeavours of parents herein; as hoping hereby to serve His great, and merciful, and most principal design, who hath these keys; and whose office it is, to transmit souls, when

[1] Luke xii. 4.

they are prepared and ready, out of this world of ours into that blessed glorious world above. And though they may think themselves disappointed when, through God's blessing upon their endeavours, they have educated one to such a pitch as this young gentleman was raised and brought up unto, with a prospect and hope of his having a long course of service to run through here on the earth; yet let parents hence learn to correct what was amiss or what was wrong, not what was right and well. Their action and endeavour was, what ought to be. Their error or mistake, if there was any, was more principally, as the case is here stated, about their design and end: not that they designed such an end, for *that* also was very justifiable and laudable, but if they designed it as their more principal end, which the case, as it is now put, supposes; that is, that they take themselves to be disappointed: for no man complains of it as a disappointment, if he miss of an *inferior* end, and attain that which is *far nobler* and more excellent. Our great aim should be the subserving the design of the great Lord of heaven and earth, which ultimately and supremely refers to the heavenly, eternal state of things, and that souls may be ripened and fitted for *that;* and to do service here on earth, subordinately to the other, and while they are in preparation for the heavenly state. His principal design must be for that which is principal; and concerning that, as was formerly argued, there can be no more doubt than whether heaven or earth, eternity or time, a fixed, permanent, everlasting, or a temporary, transitory, vanishing state of things, be more valuable and to be preferred.

Our Redeemer hath acquired and doth use these keys for the translating of souls, as soon as he shall judge them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of saints in light."[1] Some he makes meet much earlier than others. His design, so far as it is known or may be supposed, should give measure to ours; therefore ours must be to make them meet as early for his purposes as is possible; as knowing it cannot

[1] Col. i. 12.

be too early. They were devoted to him early, and pursuantly hereto no time should be lost from the great business of fitting and forming them for him; inasmuch also as the same qualifications, namely, that are of highest excellency and value, do equally prepare them to serve and glorify him in either world, as he shall choose to dispose of them. And it unquestionably belongs to him to make his choice, as it does to us to endeavour to make them ready. If any of us, having purposely educated a son for the service of his prince, present him accordingly, we would submit it to his pleasure, to choose the station wherein he shall serve him; especially if he be a prince of celebrated wisdom and goodness. And should we complain that he is put early into a station of much higher dignity than we thought of?

How little is this matter considered by most that go under the name of Christian parents; that are, more generally, very solicitous to have, as they call it, their children *christened;* but never have it in their thoughts to have them educated in the knowledge of Christ, or trained up for Christ. As if their baptism were intended for a mockery, their education, in the whole course of it, hath no such reference. It is how they may with better reputation bear up, not the name of Christ, but their own. Their aim looks no higher than that they may inherit their lands, maintain the honour of their families; appear, if such be their own rank, well-accomplished gentlemen. And of some of those *little things* that are thought requisite hereto, we may say as our Saviour did in another case, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other"—the much greater things—"undone."

What should hinder but that learning to sing, or dance, or fence, or make a modish leg, might consist with learning "to know God in Christ," in which knowledge stands "eternal life!" Whatsoever hath real excellency or hath anything in it of true ornament will no way disagree with the most serious Christianity. And how lovely is the conjunction of the well-accomplished gentleman and the serious Christian!

Only sever *inconsistencies*,—as how fashionably to curse, and swear, and damn, and debauch, which are thought to belong to good breeding in our age.

Let not religion, reason, shame, and common sense be so totally abandoned all at once, as that the same persons shall take care to have their children baptized into Christ's name, and be taught to renounce by their deeds that great name, almost as soon as they can pronounce the word.

Where so direct a course is not taken to make those of the succeeding age ignominiously bad, yet how little is done towards the making of them truly and usefully good! Much care is taken to shape and adorn the outside of the man; how little to form and furnish their minds! Here, if they can be brought to make or judge of a verse, or a jest, or a piece of wit, it is a great attainment: or if, at home, they can have them taught so much law, as shall hereafter enable them to squeeze their tenants and quarrel with their neighbours, or so much of behaviour as shall qualify them to keep gentlemen company; or if, as our pious poet phrased it, they 'ship them over, the thing is done.' Then, they shall be able to talk a little of the fashions of this or that foreign country, and make much the better figure in their own.

But if, with all other parts of useful knowledge and good breeding that are thought requisite for this world, they be also well-instructed touching their Redeemer's dominion over it, and the other world also; and concerning the nature, constitution, design, laws, and privileges of his kingdom; if it be seriously endeavoured to make them apt and prepared instruments of serving his interest here, as long as he shall please to continue them in any station on earth; and that they may also be made meet to be partakers, at length, of a far more excellent inheritance than an earthly parent could entitle them to, that "of the saints in light;"[1] if they can be fitted to stand in the presence of the Eternal King, and to keep company with angels and blessed spirits above;—how worthy and noble a design is this! And with what satis-

[1] Col. i. 12.

faction is it to be reflected on, if the parents have ground to apprehend, they are herein neither unaccepted nor disappointed!

3. It is of ill presage to our land, that when he that hath these keys uses them in the so early translation of so hopeful a person as this young gentleman was, so few such are observed to spring up for the support of the truly Christian interest, in the succeeding generation. That the act of our great Redeemer and Lord herein was an act of wisdom and counsel, we cannot doubt. Against the righteousness of it we can have no exception. The kind design of it towards them whom he so translates, is so evident in the visible agreement of their spirit and way with the heavenly state as their end, as puts that matter out of question. But we are so much the more to dread the consequences, and to apprehend what may make our "hearts meditate terror."

By the Christian interest, I am far from meaning that of a party; but what every one must take for Christianity, that will acknowledge there is any such thing. And for the support of that, in the most principal doctrines and laws of it, what is our prospect?

To go down here somewhat lower.

Let us suppose a rational susceptibleness or capacity of religion, to be the *difference* of man; wherein the controversy may seem to admit of being compromised—whether it be Religion alone or Reason alone, of which this must be said, that it distinguishes man from the inferior creatures. And let it be Reason, with this addition, an aptness—*suscipere numen*—to be impressed with some religious sentiment, or to conceive of and adore an original Being,—the wise and mighty Author and Cause of all things. And now, how near akin are religion and humanity.

Let us next understand Christianity to be the religion of fallen man, designing his recovery out of a lapsed and lost state; that is, man having violated the law of his creation, and offended against the throne and government of his Creator, the supreme and universal Lord of all, it was

reckoned not becoming so great a Majesty (though it was not intended to abandon the offenders to a universal ruin, without remedy) to be reconciled otherwise than by a Mediator and a reconciling Sacrifice: for which, none being found competent but the Eternal Son of God, the "brightness of his glory" and the "express image of his person," who was also the First and the Last, the Lord God Almighty; and, partaking with us of flesh and blood, was capable and undertook to be both Mediator and Sacrifice;—it seemed meet to the offended Majesty, to vouchsafe pardon and eternal life, and the renewing grace requisite thereto, to none of the offenders but through him; and accept from them no homage, but on his account: requiring wheresoever the gospel comes, not only "repentance towards God," but "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," as the summary of the counsel of God contained therein,[1] and that "all should honour the Son," as He the Father requires to be honoured.[2]

Whereas now so apt a course as this was established for restoring man to himself and to God, through the influence of the blessed Spirit, flowing in the gospel-dispensation from Christ as the Fountain, what doth it portend when, amidst the clear light of the gospel, that affords so bright a discovery of the glorious Redeemer and of all his apt methods for bringing to full effect his mighty work of redemption, an open war is commenced against him and his whole design, by persons under seal devoted to him? If there were but one single instance hereof in an age, who would not, with trembling, expect the issue?

But when the genius of a Christian nation seems, in the rising generation, to be leading to a general apostasy from Christianity in its principal and most substantial parts; and they are only patient of some external rituals, that belong or are made appendent to it, so as but to endure them either with reluctancy or contempt; when the juvenile wit and courage, which are thought to belong to a gentleman entering upon the stage of the world, are employed in satirising

[1] Acts xx. 21—27. [2] John v. 23.

upon the religion into which they have been baptized, in bold efforts against the Lord that bought them, whither doth this tend?

Some would seem so modest, as in the midst of their profane oaths, and violations of the sacred name of God, to beg his pardon and say, 'God forgive them;' but so ludicrously as he whom Cato animadverts upon, for begging pardon that he wrote in Greek, which he was unacquainted with; saying, 'He had rather ask pardon than be innocent;'[1] for what should induce him to do so unnecessary a thing, for which pardon should be necessary? These men think pardons very cheap things! But will "God be mocked?" Or doth he not observe? It is the prevailing atheistical spirit we are to dread as that which may provoke jealousy, and to make himself known by the judgments he shall execute.

There is great reason to hope God will not finally abandon England. But is there not equal reason to fear that before the day of mercy come, there may be a nearer day of wrath coming? A day that shall "burn as an oven," and make the hemisphere about us a fiery vault! In our recovery from a lapsed state, which the religion professed among us aims at, there are two things to be effected: the restoring reason to its empire over the sensitive nature, that it may govern *that;* and the restoring religion, and love to God, to its place and power, that he may govern *us*. While the former is not done, we remain sunk into the low level with the inferior creatures; and till the latter be effected, we are ranked with the apostate creatures that first fell from God. The sensuality of brutes and the enmity of devils, rising and springing up observably among us, import the directest hostility against the Redeemer's design. And them that bid this open defiance to Him, he hath every moment at his mercy!

In the meantime, is this Emmanuel's land? His right in us he will not disclaim; and because he claims it, we may expect him to vindicate himself. His present patience we

[1] Corn. Nep. Frag.

are to ascribe to the wisdom and greatness of an all-comprehending mind. He counts not a heap of impotent worms his match! But when the besom of destruction comes, one stroke of it will sweep away multitudes. Then contempt will be answered with contempt: they cannot express higher, than to oppose and militate against a religion introduced and brought into the world by so clear, divine light, lustre and glory, not by arguments, but by jests! Oh that we could but see their arguments, to dispute those keys out of his hands that holds them! But do they think to laugh away the power of the Son of God? "He also will laugh at their calamity,"[1] etc., or expose them to the laughter of men wiser than they.[2] It is little wit to despise what they cannot disprove. When we find a connection between death and judgment, how will they contrive to disjoin them? They will be as little able to disprove the one as withstand the other.

But a great residue, it is to be hoped, our blessed Redeemer will in due time conquer in the most merciful way, inspiring them with Divine wisdom and love, detecting their errors, mollifying their hardness, subduing their enmity, making them gladly submit to his easy yoke and light burden. He is, before the world end, to have a numerous seed, and we are not to despair of their rising up more abundantly than hitherto among ourselves, so as no man shall be therefore ashamed to be thought a serious Christian, because it is an unfashionable or an ungenteel thing.

Then will honour be acquired, by living as one that believes a life to come and expects to live for ever; as devoted ones to the Ruler of both worlds, and candidates for a blessed immortality under his dominion. Nor will any man covet to leave a better name behind him here, or a more honourable memorial of himself, than by having lived a holy, virtuous life. It signifies not nothing with the many, to be remembered when they are gone. Therefore is this trust wont to be committed to marbles and monumental stones. Some have been so wise, to prefer a remembrance among them that were

[1] Prov. i. 26. [2] Ps. lii. 5, 6.

so, from their having lived to some valuable purpose. When Rome abounded with statues and memorative obelisks, Cato forbade any to be set up for him, 'because,' he said, 'he had rather it should be asked, why had he not one, than why he had?'[1]

What a balmy memory will one generation leave to another, when "the savour" of the "knowledge" of Christ shall be diffused "in every place,"[2] and everything be counted as "dross and dung," that is in any competition with "the excellency of that knowledge;" when that shall overflow the world, and one age praise his mighty works and proclaim his power and greatness to the next! And the branches of religious families, whether sooner or later transplanted, shall leave an odour, when they are cut off, that shall demonstrate their nearer union with the true Vine, or speak their relation to the "Tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations;" even those that were deciduous, and have dropped off, may, without straining a borrowed expression, signify somewhat towards this purpose.

4. From both the mentioned subjects, good parents may learn to do God and their Redeemer all the service they can, and have opportunity for, in *their own time;* without reckoning too much upon what shall be done, by a well-educated, hopeful son, after they are gone; unless the like dispensation could be pleaded unto that which God gave to David, to reserve the building of the temple to his son Solomon, which, without as express a revelation, no man can pretend. The great Keeper of these keys may cross such purposes; and without excusing the father, dismiss the son first. But "his judgments are a great deep," too deep for our line. And "his mercy is in the heavens,"[3] extending "from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children."[4]

[1] Plutarch. De Reipub: gerend: præcept. [2] 2 Cor. ii. 14.
[3] Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6. [4] Ps. ciii. 17.

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